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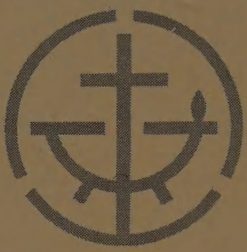

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BY

E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.

Author of "The Ascent through Christ" and "Types of Christian Life"

THIRD EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON MCMXIV

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO

MY BIBLE-CLASS

IN MEMORY OF THE DELIGHTFUL HOURS SPENT TOGETHER IN

THE STUDY OF

THE MASTER'S METHOD

AND IN THE HOPE

THAT OTHERS ELSEWHERE MAY BE LED BY IT

TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE

BY-PATHS OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVE

ON THE SAME HAPPY QUEST.

R. W. Lee

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PREFACE.

THE perennial and inexhaustible interest of the teaching of Christ is evidenced by the number of books that continue to be written on the subject. It is a matter of surprise that so few writers have dealt with His Method. With the exception of Latham's *Pastor Pastorum*, and Bruce's *Training of the Twelve*, which treat of that Method with particular reference to the Apostles, and of Blaikie's *Our Lord's Public Ministry and Pastoral Methods*, written specially for the guidance of students for the Ministry, few recent English works have given the subject more than passing treatment. Fortunately the Gospels present us with an abundance of material for our study; and many works on the Teaching are full of illuminating suggestions and helpful hints. In this little book, written for the guidance of students of the English New Testament, and more especially of leaders and members of Bible-classes, an attempt is made to give an outline of the subject in a popular rather than a scholarly manner. The writer has made a free use of such materials as have come in his way; and as the plan and limitations of the work have made it undesirable to cumber its pages with a large number of references and footnotes, he is obliged to content himself with a general acknowledgment of his indebtedness. The

limits of the work have necessitated a strict compression of material; frequently a whole topic is summarised in a few sentences, and many a paragraph might well have been expanded into a chapter. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the scriptural references, which have designedly been made as copious as possible; and, since quotation was out of the question, the reader is strongly urged to study the little book with his open Testament beside him. In this way alone can the bearing of many of the allusions be realised and the great charm of the subject adequately felt. Preachers and teachers will find a rich reward in entering thus seriously for themselves into the study of the Method of the Master, who "spake as never man spake," and who adapted His message to His audience with a tact so unfailing, and a wisdom so wonderful, that its impressiveness is traceable almost as much to its perfect form as to its Divine and saving power.

E. GRIFFITH-JONES.

The Parsonage,
Balham, S.W.

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INTRODUCTION

1. A Study of Method.—This little work deals with our Lord as the Great Teacher. We shall concern ourselves rather with the Method than with the substance of His Teaching. Our aim will be to present as bright and distinct a picture as we can of Jesus as He lived and moved among men, preaching, exhorting, conversing, warning, rebuking, encouraging those around Him, as they listened to His words, and toiled slowly and painfully after Him in the Way of Truth along which He moved with such consummate ease and grace. It is thus with the Teacher, rather than with the Teaching, that we shall concern ourselves: in what line of succession He came; the classes of people with whom He associated; what attitude He took towards the revelations of the past, and towards the religious ideas, and parties, and institutions of His day; how He dealt with in-

dividuals, with multitudes, with those who were His open or secret enemies, with those who were friendly, with those who were His chosen followers, with those who were without, or on the borders of, or within, His kingdom of grace. We shall consider the forms into which He threw His central and ruling ideas; what were the means which He took to safeguard His teaching from corruption on the one hand, and from oblivion on the other. It will be interesting to inquire why He founded no school of thought, constructed no system of philosophy, wrote no word of His revelation. And (still more interesting and important) we will try to show how the soil in which He sowed the seed of His truth reacted upon it, determining the form of the teaching, and yet leaving its vital essence so free that wherever it is sown we find it quickening into the same rich harvest, under all varieties of social and spiritual environment—and this throughout all ages, and among every race and tribe of people.

2. Difficulty of the Task.—This programme is full at once of difficulty and of promise.

It is one of difficulty. The Gospel narratives are at best fragmentary, and contain only the barest outline of the Teaching and the Method of Jesus. They took shape under conditions that made minute detail out of the question, and rendered it essential that the greatest amount of matter should be packed into the briefest possible compass. The sentences themselves bear witness to a process of compression that results in great inpregnancy of meaning and meagreness of form. Many of the utterances of our

Lord have been altogether dissociated from the occasions on which they were uttered, and from the persons to whom they were first addressed; and possibly some have become inadvertently transposed in the various accounts. If a great number of the sayings of Jesus are like "erratic blocks," which have been carried away from the bed of circumstance to which they originally belonged, by the drift of tradition or accident, and deposited in an alien context, many of them still retain some hint or reminiscence of the occasion which gave them birth. And in a great number of cases, these golden words correspond so closely to the occasion with which they are linked in the narrative, that they shed a reciprocal light the one on the other. Geologists tell us that it is possible to read so clearly the meaning of the *striae* on certain fossil remains that they can tell the state of the weather, the direction of the wind, and the very attitude and mental condition of some prehistoric creature as he stooped to quench his thirst on some evening perhaps a million years ago. By methods less mechanical, but no less sure, it is possible to reconstruct many a scene when some of the priceless words of Jesus were spoken, and to note the very look of His eye, and the tone of His voice in uttering them. This, however, is a task requiring no little delicacy of judgment and detachment of mind in order to do it successfully.

3. Value of a Study of Method.—But the task, if it is difficult, is also full of reward. In this way many an abstract utterance becomes, as it were,

clothed in flesh and blood, and appeals to us with fresh and living power. We shall be helped through many a perplexity in attempting to interpret some of the "hard" sayings of the Master. Our interest in some forgotten or neglected passage will be revived. And more than all, we shall be brought into some of that vividness of human contact with Jesus Himself which those who lived in that distant age were privileged to enjoy, and which it is so difficult for us to recover. To realise not only what He spoke, but how He said it; to catch faint suggestions of a characteristic gesture, a look, a cadence, a smile, a flash of human pity, or scorn, or indignation, as waves of sympathetic feeling swept over Him, or the deeper currents of holy wrath were stirred within Him—these are discoveries full of interest and benefit to the student of the life and teaching of Him "who spake as never man spake," and whose life was a fabric of "perfect deeds, more strong than all poetic thought". Anything that brings home to us in this way the humanness of our Lord's person, and impresses us with a sense of its reality, its scope, its tenderness, its beauty, its gentle and loving strength, also brings home to us His Divine Sonship, and enables us to realise more deeply the truth of that utterance which came out of the heart of His evangelist, "And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John i. 14).

4. Presuppositions.—We thus approach our subject with a deep sense of its interest and importance,

a heartfelt trust in the substantial historicity of the Gospels in their present form, both as regards their narratives and their summaries of the teaching of our Lord, and a humble desire to come to a better and more sympathetic understanding of the saving message He came to deliver.

PART I.

THE ENVIRONMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE BACKGROUND.

1. Jesus Came in a Great Religious Succession.—It is clear from the records that Jesus did not come into the world with alien or unrelated teaching. His revelation of Divine Truth was dovetailed into the past teachings of His race and people, and stood in vital relation to the current beliefs and ideas of the age in which He lived. He came "in the fulness of the times," gathering up in Himself all the sacred ideas of a lengthy past, separating them from the overgrowths and irrelevancies under which they had been half buried, cleansing the grain from the husk, and sowing it in the prepared soil of His times, with an eye to a world-wide harvest in the future. His contention was that He came not to destroy, but to "fulfil" (Matt. v. 17), *i.e.*, to carry the ancient revelation forward to its true issue. There was no essential truth in the Jewish religion which was not preserved with jealous care, and its hidden content unfolded in His teaching.

2. But He was in Vital Touch with His Own Times.—None the less was He in close and living touch with the age in which He lived. He appeared as one of the people, born and bred in the land of His fathers, and was known to have spent the whole of His early life in the quiet seclusion of His native village. So far as can be ascertained, He never made any attempt to acquire a wider culture by travel or the study of the great classics of the heathen world, contenting Himself with the simple and elementary

education obtainable in a Jewish home and school (John vii. 5). In His youth He probably shared the current beliefs and ideas of His contemporaries. At least we may say that He was entirely conversant with their religious notions and ideals, and knew exactly what to take for granted, what would need special explanation in His own teaching, and how best to appeal to the intelligence and hearts of His hearers.

It is thus desirable to know something more definitely of our Lord's attitude towards the records of the faith as it came to Him; something also of the social and religious condition of the people among whom He worked. His method was largely determined by His relation to these two factors.

3. His Attitude towards the Revelation of the Past.—As regards the former question, we may study, on the one hand, His bearing towards the Old Testament Scriptures, and, on the other, His attitude towards the mass of traditional belief which formed the other hemisphere of the popular religious creed of the day.

4. How Jesus Regarded the Old Testament.—Christ's sentiment towards the Hebrew Scriptures may be tersely described as one of mingled reverence and independence. In His personal life it is clear that the Old Testament held a high and sacred place. He knew it through and through; not only its words, but its deep underlying principles were interwoven with the warp and woof of His own thought. He frequently quoted from it, His quotations being drawn from all portions, showing a complete mastery over its contents and a ready power of applying it to the situation and circumstance of the hour. He found the programme of His own work and mission foreshadowed in it (Matt. xxi. 42; xxiv. 37; xxvi. 31, 54). He used its sacred commands and promises for defence against His enemies (against the Tempter, *ib.* iv. 4, 7, 10; against

the scribes and Pharisees, who came to confound Him with difficult questions, *ib.* xxii. 29-32, 35-40, 43-45 ; and against the "last enemy" which He vanquished, "even death," Luke xxiii. 46). He used it for His own inspiration and help during the trials and pressure of His life-work—it is from this point of view that we must understand the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, whose spirits fully represented that long galaxy of teachers and worthies of whom we read in the Book, and with whom Jesus communed in spirit perpetually as His forerunners in the great work of salvation. We find that He often quoted Scripture in accounting for the reception of His message, in defending His methods, in explaining the mysteries of His own sufferings and death (*cf.* Matt. xiii. 13-15 ; xxi. 16 ; Mark xiv. 49 ; Luke xxiv. 25-27, 44). It is clear from these passages that our Lord had the profoundest reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures ; and that He accepted as valid the spiritual revelation which they contain. More than this may be safely said. He built His own teaching on the basis of the fundamental spiritual truths revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, taking for granted such current beliefs concerning the existence and the attributes of God, and of the nature of man, as He felt to be valid and enduring, and carrying on the historic revelation from the point at which it had been left by the inspired thinkers of the past.

5. What Jesus took for granted is therefore an important part of the study of His preaching and of its method. It is not till we consider the question carefully that we discover how large a field this phrase covers. Beyschlag, in the preface to the English Edition of his *New Testament Theology*, writes : "How much of what belongs to the religion of the New Covenant have we to gather from mere hints, or presuppositions of Jesus and His apostles ! If we were to leave these out of account

we would, for example, have in the case of Paul no doctrine of God, in the case of Jesus no doctrine of man; that is, in either we would be deprived of one of the two poles between which religion altogether moves."

6. Reasons for this.—It is a matter of the utmost importance to both religious teachers and students to realise *why* Jesus took so much for granted. Three considerations throw light on this problem. First, He always appealed to His hearers as having an ethical and religious nature, which enabled them to come into possession of certain intuitive spiritual truths, such as the being and personality of God, the obligation of the soul to the demands of righteousness, its sinfulness, and its need of cleansing and renewal. These truths He always assumes, and He builds His teaching upon them without question or misgiving. The proof of these truths belongs to philosophy, and His purpose was not to expound a system of thought, but to reveal a method of salvation. Secondly, He spent His public ministry among a people who had received centuries of teaching in the knowledge of God, and whose spiritual sense had been trained by a manifold and severe discipline of events. It would have been a waste of time to go behind this long and strenuous education in the fundamental truths of religion; and so we find that Jesus only touched on the Old Testament teaching in order to simplify its complications, or to correct its temporary and outworn ceremonialism. And thirdly, He had a definite and very practical purpose in His personal ministry, which made it necessary to limit His own revelation within certain somewhat restricted but essential channels. We shall deal more at large with this last feature in a later chapter.

7. Christ's Doctrine of God.—Returning to the second point just alluded to, it explains why, even in *Jesus' doctrine of God*, there is so much taken

for granted. He does not begin with any proof of the Divine existence, nor yet of the goodness and holiness of the Divine nature. Jesus (1) enriched the Old Testament idea of God, filling the somewhat bare and deistic outline of the current faith concerning Him with higher and warmer contents, emphasising the evangelic conceptions of the prophets, and de-legalising the prevalent ideas of God's attributes with which the later Judaism had overlaid their simpler and profounder teaching. This was done through the doctrine of the Fatherhood, which is the central truth of the Master's teaching, in the exposition of which He expended the treasures of His mind and heart. (2) He further bridged over by His teaching the chasm between the Divine and human natures. Jesus brought God from the far-away eternities, showed how deeply He is interested in the doings and welfare of all His children, and how His chief concern is to redeem them by the infusion of His holy life and love. The proclamation of this "good news" formed the chief burden of Christ's message to the people. He "declared" the Father.

8. His Doctrine of Man.—On the other hand the *Gospel doctrine of Man* is almost entirely a matter of inference; we gather it from what Jesus takes for granted rather than from what He says. He assumes the ethical nature of humanity, and appeals to all as possessed of a true sense of right and wrong. The sinfulness of men is ever present with Him; but His view is full of discrimination. He distinguishes between sins of frailty and ignorance from such as are the fruit of conscious alienation from God, and sins of obstinate refusal to follow the inner light. He appeals to men as the objects of Divine love rather than of wrath, except as they turn wilfully away from His offered grace. He represents Himself as having come to save the lost, to bring hope to the despairing, and liberty to the

victims of others' and their own wrong-doing. His denunciations are reserved for those who reject the Divine light, and refuse His claims as the messenger of the Father's goodwill and saving power. The root idea of the Jewish doctrine of atonement is also taken for granted, and He proclaims Himself as having come to offer His blood for the remission of sins.

9. Immortality.—Jesus further assumes, if not the essential immortality of the soul, its survival in a state of blessedness or woe after death, according to the character of the life on earth. As there is scarcely any doctrine of a future life in the Old Testament, the question arises as to the source of this current belief of the survival of the soul. The answer is to be found in the teachings of the non-canonical literature, Rabbinical and prophetic, which arose after the close of the Old Testament canon, and which was largely read and accepted in the time of Christ. This literature, while full of fanciful extravagances, embodied a vivid sense of the after-life which had become a part of the working creed of the later Judaism, involving an elaborate system of rewards and punishments beyond the grave. Jesus accepted the essential features of this belief, and used the current imagery in which it was clothed in pressing home His own vivid teachings concerning future retribution and blessedness—and this without clearly defining where He drew the line between faith and superstition on this mysterious question. We may legitimately infer from this that He did not consider it of any essential importance to a true life on earth that the precise conditions of the after-life should be revealed. What He emphasises again and again is the moral and spiritual continuity of our life here and hereafter, and the certainty that what we sow we shall reap, in just measure and proportion.

10. The Messianic Idea.—Another class of ideas

which Jesus absorbed into His teaching was that which embodied the Messianic hope of Judaism. The expectation of the Messiah, who should establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and revive the glories of the old Jewish state, was probably the most vivid and important element in Judaism. It was a belief held by rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, with equal tenacity and intensity. It took the most extravagant forms, but it had a truly religious conception at its root. Jesus clearly recognised in it the idea which lent itself most easily and vitally to His own uses, and on the stock of the popular conception He grafted His teaching of the kingdom, and His own claims to acceptance. From the beginning He knew Himself to be the true promised Messiah of God—the Messenger who would also be King, Priest and Redeemer of the chosen people, and, while He kept this fact in the background during the earlier period of His mission, He never refused the title of Messiah when applied to Him in simple sincerity and homage. Through the Messianic conception He found His way as through an open door into the sympathies and affections of His followers; and, if He declined to accept their interpretation of its import, He waited till He could purify and ennoble that conception till it fitly represented His saving power and mission.

11. The Independence of Jesus.—But if Jesus showed a deep reverence for Scripture, and accepted its historic revelation of the nature of God and man, and certain of its working ideas as to the Divine leadership and purpose, He also took up a position of perfect independence towards such parts of its teaching as He deemed temporary and non-essential. The same is true of His attitude towards the current beliefs and religious customs of His day. His method involved a process of selection and rejection. Neither the Mosaic Law nor the tradition of the elders was acknowledged to be of permanent

or unmixed authority. He came to fulfil the law, but also to supersede it. Many even of its moral precepts were imperfect, as for instance the law of revenge (Matt. v. 38-39) and of hatred (*ib.* 43 ff.); others were in need of lifting to a higher plane of thought and sentiment, such as the precept concerning adultery (*ib.* 27 ff.) and concerning divorce (*ib.* 31, 32), the last mentioned being characterised as a temporary concession to the hardness of men's hearts, *i.e.*, their inability to rise to the highest conceptions of duty without a period of discipline (*cf. ib.* xix. 8). Speaking generally of our Lord's relations to the Old Testament teaching we may say that He accepted its spirit, but rejected such of its laws as failed to embody that spirit in its highest form. He enriched and purified the sanctions of conduct, laid stress on motive instead of outward act, and shifted the centre of conduct from the region of obedience to an enactment, to that of faithfulness to an inner principle. He was indifferent to questions of propriety such as the "washing of cups and pots and brazen vessels," but laid absolute stress on purity of heart (*ib.* v. 8) and cleanliness of thought (*ib.* v. 28; xv. 18); and He was specially severe on the oppressive ritualism which justified a man for neglecting the organic relationships of life in order to fulfil the religious observances of the day (Mark vii. 10-13), and which laid impossible burdens on the poor and needy (Matt. xxiii. 4, 13 ff.).

12. How this Determined Christ's Methods.—This spirit of mingled reverence and independence towards the past records and current beliefs and customs of religion at once drew the hearts of the common people and of the spiritually disposed, and alienated those classes whose interests were too deeply involved in the upholding of the established religion to permit of any interference with its forms. The new wine of the Gospel could not be put into the old bottles of Judaism, the new piece of cloth

could not be stitched on the decayed garments of the ancient religion. Therefore our Lord turned away from the official parties, preached to the multitudes at large, and gathered round Him such choice and teachable spirits as were open to His fresh and living ideas, and susceptible of the higher discipline of the Kingdom of God. He was in living touch with a deeper source of revelation than any records of past thought and inspiration, even the Father of Lights; and so He proclaimed the Divine will with a calm authority, in striking contrast with the obsequious spirit of the scribes, who were hidebound by their attitude towards the letter of Scripture and to the mass of traditional rite and precept which had long overlaid the sublime teaching of the Old Testament.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOREGROUND.

1. Political Situation.—Palestine in the time of our Lord was politically within the dominions of Rome, being indeed a Roman province ruled by tetrarchs, who owed allegiance to Cæsar as their liege lord. There were Roman garrisons in the chief towns; taxes were collected in support of the Imperial Government; the right of capital punishment was vested solely in the hands of the governors. The domination of the Roman power, while keenly resented by the people, was too strong to be resisted. And, apart from its occasional rigour and ruthlessness, this foreign rule does not seem to have been any great hardship, so far as concerned the general well-being of the community. Herod the Great, with all his cruelty, must be credited with being a strong ruler, who gave Israel forty years of peace, during which time the nation multiplied in numbers, and was allowed to follow its own customs, beliefs and worship without the interruption and disturbance occasioned by the murderous invasions, insurrections and wholesale massacres that so often swept across the path of ancient races. Nor was there any serious breach of the peace for many years after the death of Herod. This *Pax Romana* may have been the result of fear rather than the fruit of hearty loyalty, but it did its work in maintaining a settled feeling throughout the vast communities beneath the sway of the Cæsars. Art flourished, literature put forth some of its fairest blossoms, the soul

had leisure to breathe and grow. This political situation was no small factor in the conditions that existed in Palestine when our Lord began His public ministry.

2. Public Order.—An excellent military police-system was another feature of the Roman rule. Any tendency to public disorder was instantly and sternly repressed, but there was no undue interference with the liberty of peaceably disposed citizens. Apart from occasional outrages by robber bands (*cf.* Luke i. 39; ii. 4, 41, 45; x. 30), an unarmed traveller could journey throughout the length and breadth of the land without fear of being molested. Travel was freely indulged in both for social (*ib.* i. 39), political (*ib.* ii. 4) and religious purposes (*ib.* ii. 41); and the populace gathered into crowds, met for regular or informal religious purposes, and separated, with apparently the fullest cognisance of the authorities. There was probably no nation of ancient times in which the various elements in the community moved about and intermingled in such perpetual circulation as did the population of Palestine. The Jews were an eminently sociable, hospitable people. The annual feasts brought up to Jerusalem representatives from every town and village in the home-land, and from every great city of the wider empire.

3. Why Jesus Travelled.—We can thus understand the nature of the opportunity afforded to a public teacher in the time of Christ; and how it was that He was followed by crowds, and "went about doing good" from town to town and village to village. This was the natural method of spreading a new teaching in those days, and He adapted His methods, as we shall presently see, to these social conditions in a way that fills the mind with amazement at its happy wisdom and effectiveness. Under other circumstances, He would doubtless have followed other courses, and possibly taken a

permanent residence in some great centre of population; as it was, the peripatetic method was eminently suited to His purpose, and afforded Him a grand opportunity of following it in a free and untrammelled fashion.

4. Intermixture of Races.—There is abundant evidence that the population of Palestine was predominantly Jewish in most of its divisions and districts; but there was a large intermixture of other races, due to two causes. One was the fact that the country was the great highway of intercourse between the East and West; and the second was the cosmopolitan character of Roman rule, which encouraged as far as possible a free intercourse among all its subjects, with a view to weld the empire into a homogeneous whole. While each nation was left for the most part in the exercise of its own religious and social customs, there was thus a vast process of interfusion going on in manners, ideas and customs. The Jews stood apart in their extraordinary capacity for secular intercourse with other peoples, while at the same time preserving the purity of their blood and the integrity of their religious life. They seldom intermarried with other races; and while they had a system of proselytism, in virtue of which it was possible for a Gentile to become a naturalised Jew, the son or daughter of Israel who gave up the traditional religious observances of Judaism ceased to be a Jew in any distinctive sense, and was cast forth as an alien and a reprobate from the family and the synagogue. Amid the free intercourse of the times, therefore, we find that not only in Palestine, but in all the centres of population, the Jewish community was clearly and definitely marked from the rest. They had their own habits, ideals and forms of worship. The synagogue was everywhere the nerve-centre of this distinctive Jewish life.

5. The Gentile Infusion.—The Gentile section in the population was composed of diverse elements.

The conquests of Alexander had sent a wave of Hellenism over the Western portion of the Asiatic continent, and Greek merchants and travellers, philosophers and teachers were found in all centres of population in Eastern lands.[1] The later Roman invasion had overlaid this influence with another, of a more political character. In all the towns and in many of the villages of Palestine the ruling power was represented by tax-gatherers, merchants, soldiers and local governors. The maritime towns were, indeed, predominantly Gentile as regards their residential elements, and here the special culture, social customs, and even worship of the Greeks and Romans were in the ascendant. But as soon as we get away from the sea we find the Jewish element asserting its superiority, and, in spite of centuries of rough and more or less constant contact with the outside world, the Jew retained his distinctive life and followed his traditional customs and faith, which were scarcely affected by the successive waves of conquest and culture which swept over him. He stood four-square to all storms and winds, and rose practically unaffected after each impact of invasion, like a rock in middle ocean, "tempest-buffeted, citadel-crowned," which resists the "surging shock" of the restless waves with scarcely a trace of weathering. In one sense the Jew is the most impressionable of all mankind, and has always shown a wonderful adaptability to circumstances. But at heart he is adamant against all outside influences, and maintains his identity with a persistence which is the wonder of the world. Cosmopolitan in his power of adjust-

[1] This wave of foreign influence was triumphantly repulsed by the Maccabees as regards its religious effects, though it had a general civilising effect on the secular and intellectual life of the people of Israel (see Schürer, *History of Jews in Time of our Lord*, ii., p. 30). In Palestine proper Hellenism found no real footing till after the war of Vespasian (see Sanday in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, ii., p. 605).

ing himself to environment, he is intensely conservative in his inner life, and has retained his typical characteristics of race and religion amid all the welter and the change of history.

6. Jesus Restricted His Appeal to His Fellow-Countrymen.—It was to this distinctively Jewish community that our Lord limited His ministrations. The question often suggests itself why He thus restricted His appeal, and so largely ignored all the alien elements in His social environment. It was from no lack of sympathy with humanity as a whole, for the redemption of the whole race of men was clearly in His mind. He showed special pleasure when His message was sympathetically received by members of the foreign population (Matt. viii. 10, 11; xv. 28; John xii. 23), and on several occasions He gladly performed healing miracles on members of their families. But He concentrated His own energies on the chosen people, and especially on the poor and lost section of it (Matt. xv. 24), in order to lay the foundations of His kingdom on a deep and sure basis. The seed was planted deliberately in the sheltered garden of Judaism, in order that ultimately it might be more effectively sown in every land.

7. Intellectual and Religious Culture.—The vast proportion of the population was, in a certain sense, illiterate; but it would be a mistake to imagine, for that reason, that they were ignorant and unintelligent. Where social intercourse between classes and communities was so free and unconstrained, and where constant travel brought the various elements so frequently together, a certain general culture would be widely diffused. The annual journeys of the male inhabitants to Jerusalem to the feasts would do much to quicken their minds and fill them with broader ideas. The common religious training of poor and rich made for the same end. The synagogues were meeting-places

not only for worship, but for the interchange of thought and sympathy; the exposition of the ancient Scriptures by the Rabbis, and the frequent public dissertations and discussions held on points of law and ritual, while so often oppressive in tone and barren of spiritual results, were calculated to quicken the faculties and to awaken a vivid intellectual and emotional life. The village communities of Palestine were not sunk in the dense ignorance and indifference of the lower classes in many continental countries even in the present day; they would be paralleled rather by the corresponding classes in Scotland and Wales of the last generation, where, amid much secular ignorance, there was great spiritual intelligence and alertness, owing to the discipline of the pulpit and Sunday school. It was religious prejudice, the clash and resistance of obstinate and old-fashioned ideas, rather than vacuity of mind, that our Lord had to encounter in the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the principles of the Kingdom of God.

8. Religious Parties: (1) *The Sadducees.*—There was no division of the classes and the masses corresponding to the social cleavage of the present day. A great freedom of intercourse marked the relations of rich and poor, cultured and simple, owing to the religious bonds that held the nation together so compactly. The *Sadducees* were the most exclusive party, being mainly composed of the "aristocratic priestly families (Acts iv. 6), who held almost a monopoly of the high-priesthood, which, under the Roman Government, wielded considerable political power" (Sanday); this section of the community was possessed of considerable wealth, and had a proud and haughty temper. Socially, they would be analogous to our nobility, vividly conscious of their hereditary distinction. Doctrinally, they denied the resurrection of the body and all future rewards and punishments, and even maintained that the soul

perished with the body; they also denied the existence of angels and spirits. They were the rationalists and materialists of the Jewish world, though (according to Josephus) they held strongly to the freedom of the will, and believed that man, and not "fate" or the Divine will, determined human destiny. The attitude of this party towards Jesus passed through several phases. At first, so long as they imagined Him to be exclusively a reformer in religion, they ignored Him. Jesus, on His part, made few references to them during His earlier ministry, though He solemnly warned His disciples on one occasion against their secular spirit (Matt. xvi. 6, 11). When, however, our Lord drove the money-changers out of the temple courts, thus interfering with the prerogatives of the Sanhedrim, their show of superiority and indifference gave way to one of hostility. We find them then joining in a compact with the Pharisees in attempts at publicly confounding Him in His speech (Matt. xxi. 23 ff.; xxii. 23 ff.; Mark xi. 27 ff.; xii. 18 ff.; Luke xx. 1 ff., 19 ff., 27 ff.; *cf.* John xi. 47 ff., 57). And finally they plotted to compass His destruction on the nominal charge of blasphemy, but really because they feared the political results of His revolutionary teaching.

(2) *The Pharisees.*—The Sadducees had little religious influence among the people, and their machinations against Jesus were chiefly exercised through the instrumentalities of the temporal power. Not so the *Pharisees*, who were the essentially religious party. Their name corresponds with that of the Elizabethan *Separatists*, in that they drew a deep line of cleavage between themselves and the irreligious world, and constituted themselves into the repositories and the safeguards of the truth. They were pledged to a strict standard of personal life, and many of them were men of high character. Originally they had arisen as the party of protest

against the liberalising tendencies of the Hellenisers in the time of the Maccabees; they were the Puritans of that day, determined to make no truce with the influences that tended to broaden and emasculate Judaism of its distinctive doctrines and customs; their principle was complete separation from everything non-Jewish, whether in politics, in belief, or in manners. As such they were opposed to the Sadducees, who were always more or less in league with the reigning secular power, and careless of the exclusive aspects of the national faith. The doctrines of the Pharisees were also in strong opposition to the materialistic tendencies of the Sadducees. They advocated a scrupulous adherence to the law, written and oral; held the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a system of future retribution, and were deeply imbued with the Messianic hopes of the nation, looking "for a literal reign of God upon earth, when the power, of which they were meanwhile deprived, would be in their hands"; for the Messianic kingdom was to be the kingdom of the saints, and they were the saints. The Messiah was to be the Son of David; He would deliver Israel from the supremacy of the Gentiles who were to become subject to Him, and would thrust out the sinners (*i.e.*, the Sadducees) from the inheritance of God. They strongly believed in angels and spirits and in Divine providence. Though they held the freedom of the will, they also believed in Divine influence and agency as co-operative with it in the doing of what was right and good. Thus prayer was a cardinal article of their belief and practice. Edersheim puts the contrast between these two parties thus: "Properly understood, the real difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees seems to have amounted to this: that the former accentuated God's pre-ordination, the latter man's free-will: and that while the Pharisees admitted only a partial influence of the human

element on what happened, or the co-operation of the human will with the Divine, the Sadducees denied all absolute pre-ordination, made man's choice of evil and good, with its consequence of misery and happiness, to depend entirely on the exercise of free-will and self-determination" (*Life and Times of the Messiah*, i., 316).

The Pharisees were "Separatists".—The Pharisees were, as we have seen, "separatists" from the common people, in that they professed to keep the Law in its strictness down to its last "jot" and "tittle,"—a counsel of perfection beyond the power of the average man. This strictness was mainly a matter of formality, and concerned externals only; and the contrast between their punctilious regard for trifles and their neglect of the deeper ethical principles underlying the Mosaic legislation is sternly satirised by Jesus in several of His discourses (see Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16; xii. 34, 39; xv. 7; xxi. 31 ff.; xxiii. 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; Mark vii. 6, etc.).

The Scribes.—This was not a third party with clearly marked differences of beliefs from those just described. They were the class professionally learned in the Law, and were drawn from both the others, though they naturally belonged chiefly to the Pharisees (Mark ii. 16; Luke v. 30)—a cross division which must be carefully borne in mind. These scribes, otherwise called "lawyers" (Luke vii. 30, etc.) and "doctors in the Law" (*ib.* v. 17), were men who gave themselves to the mastery of the details of the Law, written and oral, and to its exposition in the synagogues (*cf.* Mark i. 22) and elsewhere. They did this without fee or material reward, except the high honour in which they were generally held, and of which they were very ambitious (Matt. xxiii. 5-11; Luke xi. 43, 45; xx. 46). The scribes were jurists rather than theologians, and spent their skill on the elaborate exposition of ceremonial trifles instead of the enforcement of true religion. Their

great care was for ritual rather than conduct ; correctness of behaviour, and not holiness of character, was the goal of their teaching (Matt. xxiii. 23 ; Luke xi. 44). This explains the uncompromising attitude taken by our Lord towards them during His ministry, especially the latter period.

Other Parties.—Two other classes must be mentioned. The *Zealots* or *Cananæans* were the national party who gave practical expression to the Jewish hatred of the foreign yoke, and worked for the re-establishment of the temporal power of the Jews. The Sadducees were in alliance with the Roman Government ; the Pharisees, as the religious party, usually held aloof from all political movements. But the Zealots were always plotting against the authorities, without much success at this time ; later on, at the siege of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), they were the leaders in the terrible scenes which led to the destruction of the city. One of the apostles had been a member of this party (Luke vi. 15). Over against these we find another political party, the *Herodians*, the partisans of the Idumæan dynasty, heathen in sympathies and yet conformists to the Jewish ritual for political reasons. In close alliance with the Roman power, they did what they could to leaven Judaism with foreign influences and a lax ethical tone. "They vied with the Sadducees in scepticism, and with the Greeks in licentiousness, pandered to the vice and cruelty of the Herods, and truckled to the Romans." It is significant of the immoral temper of all the national parties that not only the Pharisees as regards the Sadducees, but the Herodians as regards both parties, merged their mutual enmities in an unholy alliance in order to waylay and destroy Jesus, joining in the common plot which led to His crucifixion (Mark iii. 6 ; *cf.* Matt. xxii. 16). Lastly, we come to the *Essenes*, the ascetics of the period, who made much of the discipline of the body, held to community of goods, and

were marked by a high ethical life, full of benevolence and kindliness of heart. There was much in their tenets in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, but He was no ascetic, and the similarity of His teaching to theirs has been much exaggerated (by Renan and others). They were a small sect, numbering at this time about 4,000 persons in all; their retired, non-aggressive mode of living kept them aloof from the main current of Jewish life; the name indeed does not occur in the New Testament.

9. Classes and Parties among the Jews: Village Life.—When we direct our attention to the social condition of this Jewish community, we find that it was predominantly pastoral and agricultural in character, with the usual industrial element found in the simplest form of society. Abroad the Jew became a trader, artisan, or merchant, but at home he largely followed the traditional occupation of farmer and shepherd. The population was chiefly distributed in small towns and villages which retained their distinctive life from generation to generation, and to which families were hereditarily attached (*cf.* Luke ii. 3). The town or "city" was usually a walled place, capable of defending itself from assault; the village was not so protected, and was thus dependent on the nearest town for its government, and for defence in time of danger. In Galilee there were numerous "towns" and "villages" in which Christ frequently preached (Mark i. 39; Matt. xi. 1), and into which He sent the Twelve (Mark iii. 14); many of these so-called villages are said by Josephus to have contained as many as 15,000 inhabitants — but this must be an exaggeration — and, in any case, to have included the outlying suburbs. For the most part the towns must have been much smaller, and many of the villages mere hamlets. They were, however, sufficiently numerous to be in close touch with one another, so that, when Jesus was in any place, the news speedily

spread that He was there, and multitudes came together from all directions to hear Him (Matt. iv. 23-25; xv. 30; Mark v. 31; Luke xii. 1; John v. 13). The communal life of some of the older villages was marked by special characteristics: Nazareth had a very evil repute in the country around (John i. 46); Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, are stigmatised by our Lord Himself for their spiritual dulness and indifference (Matt. xi. 20-24); and He warns His disciples not to waste their efforts on such unimpressionable communities (Luke x. 10, 11).

10. The Spiritual Atmosphere.—When we turn from these rival or related parties in the State and the Church, and ask what was the general religious temper of the people, we find it somewhat difficult to sum up the situation in a few words. Judaism was a very complicated system of thought and life. It was the growth of long centuries of spiritual travail and political turmoil. In it we find two essentially distinct ideals interwoven—a high and beautiful moral piety, and a mechanical ceremonialism. The "Law" and the "Prophets" were an amalgam of the noblest ethical teaching and of the crudest formalism. The long feud between the priest and the prophet had ended in a compromise, in which the prophetic element had been well-nigh stifled, and legalism reigned almost supreme. But in the Sacred Scriptures the original fountains of the prophetic revelation were still accessible, and they preserved the higher life of the nation from being utterly extinguished. While Isaiah i. 10-20 and Micah vi. 6-8 and a hundred such passages were being read from week to week in the synagogues, not all the spiritual obtuseness and legal tyranny of priest, and scribe, and Pharisee could quite obscure the truth. And so we find that there were lights as well as shadows in the religious condition of the people, and that amid all the formalism of the day there was much simple piety and openness of heart.

11. The Darker Side.—Professor Sanday (in his article on "Jesus Christ" in the *Dictionary of the Bible*) summarises the situation by balancing the darker and the brighter aspects of Judaism. On the darker side the noteworthy element was the identification of morality with the precepts of the law, which led to serious evils. Since law could deal only with overt action, the importance of motive was obscured by it, and an external standard of conduct tended to become supreme. Salvation by works, these "works" being not acts of true righteousness, beneficence and love, but the keeping of purely artificial precepts, developed into an elaborate system of "merit". The pressure of these rules grew into an intolerable burden through the perpetual addition of "a mass of inferential law," which was gradually raised to the same footing of authority. This further shifted the central element of religion from the ethical to the intellectual region. A peculiar form of religious pride gradually overlaid the typical Jewish piety, and finally narrowed into a religious exclusiveness of a very offensive kind.

12. The Brighter Side.—There was thus a crying need for an ethical and spiritual revival, and fortunately there were not lacking elements of promise on which to begin the good work. The evangelic spirit of the older Judaism was not dead but sleeping, and here and there it showed itself openly in the emergence of such characters as Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, who no doubt represented a considerable class of simple and pious folk scattered throughout the community. Even in the Talmud and other current literature the true evangelic note is not wanting. There was at least a general seriousness of tone among the people, a profound religious susceptibility, a yearning for spiritual revival and freedom, a passionate hope of the long-promised Messiah, who would be the spiritual as well as political emancipator of His people. The over-

powering "sense of the Future," which has ever been the distinguishing mark of the Israelite, was intensely developed in the time of our Lord. It was one of the doors by which He entered into the hearts of His followers, and made them His own. The special "seedplot" of Christianity was found among these devout and simple folk, who were for the most part far removed from the official parties of the day, and who fed their hopes by frequent reading of the prophetic writings and the psalms. These resided chiefly in the remote towns and villages of Galilee, where Jesus began His effective ministry, and where He found His readiest and warmest supporters. It was not among the cultured but the simple, not among the wealthy but the poor, not among the religious leaders but the humble, self-respecting pious populace that He discovered the souls who were to be His first followers and apostles, and who, after being trained by Him, were to turn the world upside down with their mighty influence.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEACHER AND HIS EQUIPMENT.

Every great personality has been endowed with a natural equipment of body and mind for his life-work. Organisation and faculty are closely wedded. We may be sure that it was not otherwise with the great Teacher. The Eternal Word was incarnated in a physical form and temperament perfectly fitted for its adequate expression.

1. Personal Appearance of Jesus.—Of the outward appearance of Jesus we have no reliable record. No authentic picture or representation of Him has survived, if indeed one was ever made. The pictorial and plastic arts were rigorously tabooed among the Jews. Any attempt to represent a living creature by sculpture or painting was looked upon as a violation of the second commandment. There would thus be no thought among the immediate followers of our Lord of delineating His face and form for the benefit of posterity. Such an idea, if it had occurred at all, would be immediately dismissed as wrong. Thus, while we have portraits of almost all the great historical leaders of Greece and Rome, and the countenances of Alexander and Cæsar, Plato and Aristotle, Demosthenes and Cicero are as familiar to us as the faces of our modern celebrities, of the face of Jesus, in which was reflected "the knowledge of the glory of God" (2 Cor. iv. 6), we have no sketch or image, bust or painting. The countenance that brought home to the beholders so splendid a sense of the nearness and

love of God vanished, leaving no reliable trace behind.

2. The Legendary Portrait.—It is, however, a significant fact that all the legendary "faces" of Christ, from those which began to appear in the catacombs during the second century down to those painted in our own day, contain certain elements in common. If the Christ-countenance with which we are familiar reflects rather the sentiment of His worshippers than the features of His living person, it is still not impossible that it may contain a genuine reminiscence of His actual appearance. If that is so, we are quite within the mark when we say that in physique He was at once winning and dignified, gentle and strong, gracious and awe-inspiring; and that His presence carried a message of nearness and love to all who beheld Him. We may further say that His was not a Jewish cast of countenance, but one that was broadly human in its expression, suggesting a type of manhood that was intensely individual and at the same time universal in its appeal.

3. Testimony of the Gospels.—There are many passages in the Gospels which bear out the statement that the presence of Jesus was deeply impressive, and that His countenance was capable of an infinite play of expression, from the tenderest pathos to the most awe-inspiring wrath: "Tears were in Him, and consuming fire, as the lightning lurks in the drops of the summer cloud".

The most expressive feature of the body is the *eye*. It is at once the special organ of the understanding, the emotions and the will. And we find that many of the most characteristic utterances of Jesus were accompanied by a look which remained indelibly imprinted on the memory of the disciples. Even the gracious words He spoke were sometimes but the smallest part of His message; what He *looked into men* was more eloquent than what He

said to them. Remonstrance (Matt. xvi. 23), reassurance (*ib.* x. 3), anger (*ib.* iii. 5), love (*ib.* x. 21), benediction (Luke vi. 20), kindly appreciation (John i. 42), exaltation of spirit (*ib.* xi. 41; xvii. 1), forgiveness (Luke xxii. 61), pathos and pity (Mark vii. 34)—all these emotions expressed themselves in His looks, like sunshine and shadow chasing each other across the summer sky. His eye was often misty with unshed tears. And sometimes the tears brimmed over, and He wept (Luke xix. 41; John xi. 35).

The presence of Jesus was at times full of a strange and commanding power, inspiring both awe and love. The disciples were admitted into the intimacies of His friendship, but there were limits of approach which they dared not cross. The Pharisees, bold at first in the insolence of their self-assertion, were gradually cowed by an overmastering sense of His greatness and nobility, till at last they drew back, silent and baffled (Matt. xxii. 46; *cf.* John viii. 9). There was a moment in His intercourse with His disciples—it was during the last journey to Jerusalem—when they fell behind Him in wordless wonder and fear (Mark x. 32). There were other moments in His life when His silent presence completely dominated His enemies, so that, though bent on His destruction, they could do nothing to Him, and "He passed through the midst of them, and went His way" (Luke iv. 30; *cf. ib.* xxii. 53; John viii. 59). While accessible to little children, who came fearlessly to His embrace (Mark x. 13), and answered freely to His call (Matt. xviii. 2), He could subdue an armed multitude with a look. In the garden, when the emissaries of the Jewish rulers, led by Judas, came upon Him suddenly, He met them with a mien so majestic, and a voice so terrible, that they drew back in the very act of seizing Him, and fell backward "to the ground" (John xviii. 6). His presence

subdued the truculent Pilate at the trial, filling him with a vague fear of passing a false judgment, and causing him to cast the responsibility of condemnation on the priestly party (Matt. xxvii. 24). Even on the cross His bearing was so impressive that the multitudes who had hounded Him to His death were sobered into a mood of strange disquietude, and those who a few hours before had cried: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" went home "smiting their breasts"; while the Roman centurion who directed the sickening operation of crucifixion, and had doubtless been hardened into callousness of feeling by brutal custom, broke out at what he saw into the startled cry: "Truly this was a Son of God!" (*ib.* xxvii. 54). In all this there is no hint of consciously exerted power; the impression produced by the presence of Jesus was natural, and involuntary, and inevitable. The grandeur of His nature simply and perfectly expressed itself in His look and manner.

4. Physique and Temperament.—Physique and temperament are closely related, perhaps mutually conditioned. From the Gospels we may infer certain safe conclusions concerning the psychic qualities which characterised our Lord's humanity. They may be summed up in two words—fulness and balance.

Many of the great personalities of the world have been marked by certain obtrusive qualities in marked contrast with the poverty of their natures in other directions. Their intensity has been to some extent neutralised by their limitations. In the Gospel picture of Jesus, on the other hand, we note a nature fully developed in every direction. Mind and heart and will are equally intense, equally vivid, and, at the same time, perfectly proportioned.

By way of illustration, it is interesting to note how impossible it is to class our Lord among the "temperaments" into which men are sometimes

crudely classed—the sanguine, the phlegmatic, the choleric, the melancholic. And yet how easy it would be to point out features in His character which would suggest each and all in turn! Like the sanguine man He naturally took bright views of life. He was not, however, oblivious of the deep mystery that surrounds the human soul with its shadow, and the vision of human sin at times wrapped His soul in a terrible darkness. There were times, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the exaltation of His spirit was indescribable, irradiating His person as with a dazzling light; there were times when He descended into depths of woeful feeling, and confessed that His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. His nature had periods of overflow and subsidence; joy and sadness chased each other within Him as He turned His gaze alternately on the glory and shame of life, and realised now the nearness of God to men, and again the distance of men from God. Withal, we note a remarkable union of energy and persistence, of manifold activity and patient endurance. He was a great traveller, and yet He was deeply contemplative; He loved society, but He often fled into solitude. All these alternations of feeling and experience were knit together into consistency and firmness by His unvarying purposefulness and perfect faithfulness to His great life-work. Impressionable as He was to His surroundings, He never lost firm hold of the deeper facts of life, and He was absolutely steadfast to the revealed will of God. It was easy to give His sensitive heart exquisite pain; it was impossible to make Him swerve a hair's-breadth from the rugged path of duty.

5. Mental Characteristics.—Books have been written about the mental characteristics of our Lord. The same comprehensiveness and delicacy of organisation meets us here. His intellectual qualities were rich and abundant, and it is clear that He used

all His human faculties with a perfect mastery over their resources. Very exquisite was His sympathy with Nature in all her varying moods; equally exquisite is the use to which He put the results of His loving observation. The commonest facts of the external world and of human life were utilised to illustrate the laws of the spiritual kingdom. Mrs. Browning sings of the great Greek dramatist:—

> Our Euripides the human,
> With his droppings of warm tears,
> And his touches of things common,
> Till they rose to touch the spheres.

But Jesus showed how the "spheres" lie hidden in miniature in the earth that blossomed at His feet, and in the trivial round of drudgery in the home: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within [among] you". He showed the poet's insight, both in the happy choice which marked His illustrations, and in the exquisite drapery of language in which He clothed His thoughts. The parables of our Lord form an arabesque of imagery which has never been approached for beauty of conception or delicacy of workmanship. The truths which they embody are like "apples of gold in baskets of silver".

6. Two Supreme Qualities.—Finally, we may summarise this sketch of our Lord's equipment as a Teacher by mentioning two supreme characteristics of His personality which pervaded His whole being, and governed His attitude both towards the truth which He taught and the people whom He instructed. Viewed from an external stand-point, they are the chief secret of His charm and attractiveness; viewed from within, they unite the human and Divine aspects of His nature in perfect harmony and counterpoise.

The first is His extraordinary and unfailing *sympathy* with human nature in all its phases and its conditions. He not only lived among the people of His time as one of themselves, but He entered into

their ideas and emotions, felt for and with them in their varied experiences, divined their unspoken thoughts, anticipated their needs, grieved over their sins, and in a hundred subtle ways made them feel that He understood them through and through. We come frequently upon instances of the wonderful range and depth of the great Teacher's sympathy, which, on its passive side, manifested itself in an exquisite sensibility of feeling and a susceptibility of mind to His surroundings, and, on its active side, poured forth in a continuous stream of comfort, stimulus and healing influence, both in word and deed.

The second characteristic was still more remarkable. Our Lord possessed the spiritual "temperament" in its fulness and power. His nature was open Godward at all times. The best of men have their periods of spiritual solitude and dulness; their faith comes rather in flashes, in high tides of experience and insight, than in steady and unchanging vision. But while our Lord's nature had its periods of ebb and flow, exaltation and subsidence, we have no evidence that there was any pause, any intermission in the perfect fellowship between Him and the Father. It changed its colour, but not its constancy. This relation of Jesus to His Father was one of entire dependence and absolute confidence: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John v. 19, 20; *cf.* xi. 41, 42). It was this that made all men feel that Jesus brought God near to them, that He spoke God's words to them and revealed the Divine mind and will with self-evidencing power and reality. The impression He made on the multitudes who heard Him was immediate. He struck a "personal note"

so unique, and at the same time so appealing, that they listened with bated breath to this fresh and living voice which brought home to them the highest truths of their nature in simple diction and clothed with the loveliest imagery, and whose presence carried with it everywhere the joy and spell of the Divine presence. It is the *differentia* of Jesus among all the great teachers of the world, that He "revealed" God to men, not only in what He said, but in what He was: "No man hath seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, which dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18).

PART II.

THE METHOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEACHER'S AIM.

1. Method Determined by Aim.—All method is determined by the end in view; and if we would rightly measure and value a great man's work we must understand, first of all, the goal to which he directs his energies. We cannot well judge of the form and method of our Lord's teaching, therefore, without obtaining, first, a clear idea of the purpose He had before Him in all His teaching.

The primary function fulfilled in the life of Jesus was that of a public teacher. He had other functions to fill, but they came afterwards, and emerged out of this as time went on. His kingly and priestly work was initiated by His prophetic. What was the special and distinctive feature of the teaching of Jesus Christ?

2. A Definition. — Broadly speaking, Christ's aim was *the dissemination of spiritual truth.* This statement, however, by itself is too inclusive. He did not come to reveal all truth, but only such portions of it as had not hitherto been made known concerning the vital relations between God and the human soul, and that which concerns human souls in their relations with one another, individually and collectively. His central purpose was to present God in His Fatherly attitude and will to the race; to make known His undying love to men, irrespective of their moral condition; to persuade them of His willingness to save them from the guilt and power of sin, and of His desire to enter into relations of

perfect peace and friendship with all mankind. All the lines of His teaching converge on this point. A passionate desire to bring men into the attitude of filial love to God as their Father, so that they may share in the power and privileges of Divine life, was the master motive of the great Teacher.

3. Some Corollaries.—If we grasp this firmly, we shall find much further light thrown both on what is included in the teaching, and on what is omitted from it.

What Jesus Excluded from His Teaching.—Our Lord, for instance, did not undertake to clear away all misconceptions regarding our knowledge of the world in which we live. He did not anticipate or forecast any of the discoveries of science. He did not correct men's current notions of history. He freely used the events and legends of the past as illustrations for the explication and enforcing of spiritual lessons, but did not in so doing vouch for their accuracy. Whether He understood the narratives of the Old Testament to be purely historical, or as history intermingled with legend and myth, cannot be fairly inferred from His references to them. He did not settle for after ages the exact character of Old Testament inspiration. His profound reverence for the ancient Scriptures does not imply any particular theory of their origin. All these questions were irrelevant to His purpose, and He left them to be settled on their merits, as the progress of thought and the advancement of knowledge might determine. He took the stand-point of His contemporaries on these matters, appealed to His hearers on the basis of their actual knowledge or ignorance of literary, historical and scientific questions, and used the current conceptions of His day as vehicles for the dissemination of the saving truths of His Gospel. It would be altogether foreign to His purpose to interfere with the human mind in its search for truth in any direction, much

less to hinder its free progress in knowledge by setting His *imprimatur* on imperfect conceptions whether of past history or of the laws and operations of nature.

4. Other Exclusions.—Again, men have diligently sought for indications of Christ's political and social creed in the Gospels. These will be sought for in vain. He took the political situation of His day for granted, and, when the ruling party tried to force Him to an exposition of His views, He gave them an enigmatic answer which left them in greater perplexity than before (Matt. xxii. 22). His consistent attitude towards the externals of government is expressed in the words, "My kingdom is not of [from] this world" (John xviii. 36).

Similarly, it is in vain that we look to the teaching of Jesus for a definite enunciation of the ideal social order. Christianity is compatible with perfect loyalty to any existing form of government, whether it be an absolute or a limited monarchy, a modified republic or a complete democracy; and it is consistent with any form of economic order, whether it be predominantly individualistic or socialistic. This does not mean that there is no political or social *message* in the Gospel. In enunciating the laws of the Kingdom of God, *i.e.*, the kingdom of souls living in obedience to the Divine law and love, Jesus brought a new spirit into the world which tends to elevate and purify all the outer ordinances of life, to inform every method of government with holier ideals, and to raise the social relations of men to a higher plane. Those, therefore, who attempt to justify their own pet scheme for reforming the external relations of men by an appeal to the words of Christ, as though these were inconsistent with any alternative scheme, are as wide of the mark as those who turn altogether away from Christianity on the plea that it has no social message at all. Jesus aimed at the renewal of the soul;

and in a community of renewed souls all external relations will in the end adjust themselves in accordance with the law of love. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John vi. 63), He once said, and it is a law of life that it both adapts itself to its environment, and gradually transforms that environment into harmony with itself.

5. Unsettled Problems.—But there are other omissions in the Gospel message which are less easy to explain because they would seem to be a part of the soul's proper life. Jesus left behind Him many unsettled questions. His references to the future life, for instance, are few and meagre. He planted deep in the hearts of His disciples the hope of His return to earth, to reign in glory over the nations, but He left the time and the manner of His return vague and uncertain. He instituted a society called the Church, whose function it is to bear witness to Him and to His truth in the world, and certain ordinances called sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), but He nowhere defines their precise character and significance. These omissions have been the cause of endless controversies and divisions among His followers, which have apparently greatly hampered His work and influence among men. How are we to explain these gaps in the great Teacher's message?

Two considerations help to throw light upon these puzzling facts. First, it seems to have been no part of His purpose to lift the veil of futurity either in this life or that which is to come. Beyond the calm but confident promise of a glorious future for His people in the unseen world, in which they will enjoy His perfect fellowship, and receive an adequate reward for faithful service on earth, He left the state of the blessed dead undefined, justifying, however, a reverent use of the sanctified imagination in picturing forth its conditions (John xiv. 2). Simi-

larly He left the doom of the lost undefined, though the fact of a sure punishment awaiting them hereafter was stated in a series of terrible figures. The details of heaven and hell He did not reveal, the facts being fully adequate to inspire such hopes and dreads as are needful for healthy encouragement in goodness, and for wholesome dissuasion from sin and worldliness.

Secondly, as regards the ordinances and regulations of the Church in this world, all that was needful for His purpose was attained by their institution. It is a part of the conditions and of the well-being of life in Nature that it should realise itself through conflict and contradictions; it attains to its possibilities through the law of struggle. This would seem to be true of the spiritual life also. Truth realises itself through form; these forms are the result of struggle and adaptation; and the controversies and divisions which to our eyes seem to have hampered the onward march of the Gospel in the Church and in the world may, from a higher point of view, have been necessary conditions for its final realisation and conquest. We are as yet in the thick of the struggle, and we cannot at present see the end. The leaven of the kingdom is still fermenting through the mass of humanity; finally it will attain through multiplicity to unity, and by way of divisions of opinion and oppositions of will it will come to its final harmony.

By realising this clearly defined purpose of our Lord, and the limitations involved in the plan of His teaching, we are saved from many difficulties and perplexities of faith as regards what is included and what is omitted from it. Our minds are thus freed to deal with its actual contents without distraction.

6. How the Truth was to be Disseminated.—We have defined our Lord's ideal purpose as the revelation of that portion of spiritual truth which concerns

the relations of the soul to God and of souls to one another. Actually it aimed at the redemption of the soul by the infusion of the Divine truth into it as a transforming and renewing power. His aim, that is, was not abstract, but concrete; not theoretical, but practical. Truth enshrined in character; the establishment of the soul in goodness; the development of the Christian temper and character; the revelation of the Divine life as a saving power among men—these are different ways of expressing the same fundamental fact. Jesus came to rescue men from sin and spiritual death by revealing God, and binding them to Him in filial love. *How was this saving truth to be disseminated?*

7. It was to be disseminated through personality in a very definite and particular way. To understand the manner in which our Lord intended His Gospel to be spread abroad in the world furnishes us with the key to many mysteries in the form in which it has come down to us. It was clearly a part of His great purpose that His truth should be disseminated primarily *through personality*. Not through institutional methods; not through a literature; but *through men* must the message of salvation be first conveyed to the world. From lip to lip, and heart to heart, the truth must be passed on; the Divine life in one soul was to be as a torch with which to kindle it in another. Jesus founded not a college, but a Church, which means not a hierarchical or sacerdotal institution, but a company of redeemed souls, bound to God the Father in sonship, and to each other in brotherhood, and to the outside world in boundless goodwill; to this Church He entrusted the seed of His truth, and to it He looked for the preservation of the truth, and for its dissemination as spiritual knowledge and power in the world.

8. The Evidence for this.—Everything depends on a proper realisation of this fact, and it will be well to consider the evidence for it.

(1) In the first place we find that the Gospel was incarnated in our Lord Himself in a unique and unparalleled way. In the case of other great teachers of spiritual truth we can recognise a clear distinction between their personality and their message. They bear witness to it as something independent and separable from themselves. It does not depend for its validity on what they themselves are; it carries with it its own credentials, and is equally true whether they are fully obedient to it themselves or not. But it is universally felt that Jesus is Himself the Father's gift to the world; that He enshrines the Divine love in His own Person; that His "life" is the "light" of men. He Himself was fully conscious of this, and His claim is acknowledged to be valid by all who have studied the records. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me" are words which no one else could have uttered without being at once convicted of blasphemy; as regards Jesus, they are a simple statement of fact. His life was the true revelation, of which His words were but the vocal expression; and in communicating Himself to His disciples in influence and love He was communicating the life which He came to reveal. We can never separate the truths of Christianity from the Person in whom they were first incarnated.

(2) Now the influence of personality can never be adequately transmitted by any other means than through personality itself. Jesus could enunciate the laws of His kingdom and the principles of His character in words, which could be written down, and read in a book; but He could not impart in this way the quality and impulse of His own life; that must first be impressed on His messengers, and by them conveyed with His message to those whom they sought to reach. Thus He appointed a company, not of scribes, but of apostles, and before He

sent them forth He subjected them to a careful and loving personal training, during which He not only communicated His truth to their intellect, but impressed His personality upon their life, and fitted them to convey the truth to others through the medium of their personal influence and teaching.

9. Dangers of this Method.—But there is a subtle danger inherent in this method of disseminating truth. It is that the truth should be contaminated in the process of transmission from mind to mind, and from life to life. Preconceptions and prejudices, the selective and reactive influence which the mind automatically exercises on what it hears, together with its natural frailty and inaccuracy, all combine to make personality at once a perilous as well as a fascinating medium for propagandism. The most obvious method of guarding against this peril is the Written Word. An authoritative text-book is the surest check on the corruption and contamination of the teaching. It provides an objective test and norm for the message as it percolates through the personal work and influence of those who preach it. The Church thus needs the Book in order to maintain itself as an adequate medium for the dissemination of the Faith through the spaces of the world and the centuries of time.

10. No Written Gospel by Command of Jesus.—It is a startling fact, however, that whereas the rise of the Christian literature which we call the New Testament was clearly providentially ordained, our Lord Himself neither wrote a word of His own teaching, nor, so far as we know, commanded His apostles to do so. This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that the ancient Jewish religion was enshrined in an authoritative text-book which Jesus, in common with His contemporaries, held in the deepest reverence. The commission which He gave His apostles was, "Go ye into all the world and *preach* the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15),

"*teaching* all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever" He had "commanded" them (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20), but in no case did He include an injunction to commit the Gospel to writing. He did not, however, leave them "comfortless" or unhelped; but gave them the promise of His Holy Spirit ("even the Spirit of truth"), whose function it was to "guide them into all the truth," *i.e.*, concerning Himself (John xvi. 13, R.V.), and to "bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever" He had said unto them (*ib.* xiv. 26). It is a historical fact that the Written Gospel was the outcome of the providential necessities of the Early Church, and not the result of the command of the Founder of our Faith. His direct care was for its oral enunciation and propagation. His was a spoken message, a gospel of words, and deeds, and personality. This was its primary characteristic; and this it was that conditioned its form and determined the Master's method more than anything else. How, we shall see in the following chapter.

Note.—The subject dealt with in this chapter furnishes the explanation of two facts that otherwise are inexplicable—first, why the teaching of the Master was not committed to writing during His life or immediately after His death; and, secondly, why it was finally written in the fourfold form in which it has come down to us. (1) Our Lord's teaching being oral was orally conveyed to others during the lifetime of the first witnesses. In the first instance it was popularly disseminated by conversation, debate and preaching, as is indicated in the Acts; this with a view to the persuasion of the multitudes and the conversion of individuals. There are indications that great care was taken to give the general outlines of the teaching accurately and without admixture, and that the utmost reverence was felt for the *ipsissima verba* of their Lord's utterances by the apostles. Beyond this, converts were taught from the earliest times in a more detailed form in classes in the "doctrine" of Christ (*cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 11; Col. ii. 6). The reverence for the written words of the earlier revelation, and the care for the details of religious instruction which marked the Jewish mind, would greatly help to govern the methods and ideals

of the first instructors in the Christian faith. While the actual witnesses of the life and teaching of Christ were alive there would be no desire and no need for the committal of the Gospel to writing among a people thoroughly disciplined in the art of oral instruction. Thus the teaching would not need to be written in any form for many years in order to escape contamination or substantial inaccuracy; and the oral Gospel was probably the only form in which the message existed. This, however, would naturally tend to increasing brevity, and only such portions of the teaching would be included as were essential to a firm grasp of its essential principles. The form in which our Gospels exist are the fruit of this process of condensation and exclusion. (2) But in course of time, the first witnesses would one by one be removed by death, or so scattered as to be outside the reach of appeal. There was thus a danger both of corruption and of oblivion for the message. For this reason typical versions of the Gospel would tend to become authoritative, and the immediate disciples of the apostles would endeavour to perpetuate the teaching of their favourite teachers by committing them to writing. Thus the Gospels of Matthew and Mark probably arose out of the "common tradition". Again, as the process developed, many versions of the story of Jesus and His words would appear, some of which would be less accurate than others. This would be an opportunity for believers of a scholarly turn of mind (such as St. Luke) to collate as many of these versions as were accessible, sift their material, and formulate a comprehensive version which would combine their authentic features into an organic whole. Finally, before the last survivor of the original band passed away, his disciples would have a strong desire to rescue his reminiscences from oblivion ere it was too late, and the Fourth Gospel would arise as a supplement to the others, in some cases filling in gaps in the history and the teaching as found in the Synoptics, but, on the whole, following its own course, and bearing strong marks of the individuality of the writer, especially in the discourses. We thus see how the Gospels as we have them arose and took their final form.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORAL METHOD.

1. Its Origin.—Oral instruction is as old as human society, being the only method of tuition before the invention of letters. Nor is it likely that books will ever supersede the spoken word as a means of conveying thought from one mind to another. The living voice has many advantages over the written message for the enforcement of truth, and as an instrument of rebuke, appeal and persuasion. In all high teaching the personality of the teacher plays an essential part, and this cannot be transmitted except faintly and inadequately through the medium of writing. There will thus always be an important function for the speaker to fulfil. At the same time the widespread dissemination of literature has profoundly affected and to some extent restricted this function in modern times. We must go back to illiterate ages, and reconstruct a very different environment from our own, with its highly organised press, in order to realise the place which oral teaching has filled in the history of human thought and of religion.

2. Instruction in Palestine was Oral.—Among the Jews, in the time of our Lord, this method of instruction was developed into an elaborate institution; probably in no other land or age did it ever play so large a part in the national life. The education of the people was based on a system of tuition in which the voice of the speaker and the memory of the hearer were the exclusive organs.

Behind everything of course lay the "Written Word,"—the Old Testament Scriptures,—in the knowledge of which every devout and patriotic Jew made it his aim to be proficient; and to this end he was early taught to read. But copies of the Scriptures, being all hand-written, were comparatively rare, and so expensive that none but the comparatively well-to-do could ever hope to possess one. Thus the people depended on the frequent public reading of the Book in the schools and synagogues for their mastery of its contents. But alongside of this written literature there was a highly organised system of oral instruction, embodying the "Tradition of the Elders" (Matt. xv. 2), a vast body of learned disquisition, commentary and rule, in which the precepts of the Law were interpreted and applied to daily ritual and life. It was as we have seen the function of the scribes—specialists whose function it was to make an expert study of the Law, written and oral—to instruct the common people in this accumulated lore of the elders. This they did with remarkable zest and zeal, and as a labour of love. It would be impossible to exaggerate the unique devotion of this body of learned men, who for three centuries gave themselves to a difficult and complicated task, and with scrupulous care and accuracy transmitted the teaching of the Rabbis to their fellow-countrymen. Whatever may have to be said in denunciation of the substance of their teaching, with its stifling of the soul in an elaborate network of trivial and unmeaning regulations, with its substitution of ritual observances for ethical principles, and its crass substitution of custom for spiritual motives as the mainspring of the religious life; this at least must be said,—they gave their services freely to the religious education (as they conceived it) of the people, and prepared them for the coming of the great oral Teacher in a way that was unique and providential.

3. Rabbinical Methods.—It was a fundamental precept of the Rabbis, "Commit nothing to writing". The vast mass of erudition of which they were masters, and which they taught their pupils, had been handed down to them by word of mouth, and they took the utmost pains to transmit it to others in the same way without corruption, alteration or addition in the slightest degree. This repeated feat of memory was performed with slavish devotion from generation to generation; it was, indeed, not till the end of the second century A.D. that the Rabbinical literature was committed to writing, though the *Halacha* and the *Haggada* had come into existence at least a hundred years before the birth of our Lord.

4. Two results followed, in the benefits of which the whole community shared. First, *a special sanctity was associated with the art of repetition* in the process of religious instruction. Where the least originality would have been fatal to accuracy, the qualifications for success in the study of the Law were a retentive memory and a scrupulous adherence to the letter of the tradition. The ideal disciple was the man who handed on everything he had received in the *ipsissima verba* of the teacher; and a curse was passed upon him if he let anything slip. Rabbi Eliezer boasted that he had never taught anything that he had not learned from his instructor. Just as the expert copyists of the day, in writing copies of the written Scriptures, aimed at being so accurate that the "jots and tittles" of the Law were all faithfully reproduced, so all oral disciples aimed at reproducing the minutest details of the instruction passed on to them without the slightest variation in matter or form. Thus, there would gradually arise a public sentiment regarding accuracy in the promulgation of any form of religious teaching, such as in our own days is shown only by critical scholars, or by trained

experimentalists in the dissecting-room and laboratory. If any new teacher arose, whose instruction was valued by the community at large, and more especially by a band of personal followers, his words would be carefully noted by all, and even though never written would have an excellent opportunity of being widely disseminated in the exact form in which they had first been spoken.

Secondly, as the result of this widespread and elaborate system of oral teaching, the public memory would be trained to an *instinctive habit of accuracy*. People educated as the Jews were educated would naturally have prodigious verbal memories. This, indeed, is a striking feature of illiterate communities. The art of reading has involved serious penalties as a set-off to its incalculable advantages. The need for memorising facts, dates, calculations, and rules of life disappears with the cyclopædia and the ready-reckoner; and in obedience to the "law of parsimony" which runs through the universe, a faculty that is not exercised loses its keenness. The invention of letters and the spread of printed books have thus altogether changed the conditions of our mental life. No memory is capable of retaining the immense body of information necessary to the student nowadays, except in its substance, and so the verbal memory is giving place to the "reference memory"—that faculty which retains the general recollection of a subject, together with the power of readily turning up the required detail in dictionary or cyclopædia or special text-book. With certain exceptions, the art of verbal memory is, as a consequence, gradually dying out of the civilised communities. Our simpler forefathers, who knew hundreds of hymns, and whole books of the Bible, have been succeeded by a generation of worshippers many of whom can scarcely repeat "by heart" a single hymn accurately, and who depend on the concordance for

readily turning up a favourite Scriptural passage, the gist of which they know well, but whose exact words they cannot repeat *memoriter*. The gain is by no means all on our side. A well-filled memory, teeming with accurate and detailed information on a great subject, dependent on no outside help for mastery of its resources, is in itself a "breathing book," a "living library". This was the position of the well-educated Jew as regards the tenets of his religion. With a deep sense of the sanctity of the very words of the ancient books of his race and of the oral teaching he had received from his youth up on the one side, and an exquisitely trained memory on the other, he was happily equipped, first, for realising the force and originality of any new teaching, and, secondly, for readily appropriating and reproducing the form as well as contents of that teaching in after-days.

5. Jesus Accepted the Situation.—We are now in possession of the situation awaiting the new Prophet. Jesus spoke to people well trained in the oral method, and had the initial advantage of speaking to a community thoroughly prepared for what He had to say. There were no reporters by when He spoke on the lake side, on the mountain slope, on the public way, beneath the friendly roof; nor was one needed. Every listener's mind was a sensitive surface for the reception, and every memory an expert organ for the permanent retention, of His message.

6. How He Perfected the Art of Oral Instruction.—On the other hand, our Lord adapted the precise form of His teaching to the conditions of His age. It is clear that He intended from the first to be an oral Teacher and nothing else, and had made a profound study of the method best calculated to achieve success in that direction. The "Fair Deposit" of truth (2 Tim. i. 14) which He had come to reveal was thrown into the forms in which we find it in the Gospels for special reasons, exactly adjusted to the

needs of His hearers. A comparison of His utterances with those of the Rabbinical school brings home to us the extraordinary skill with which He clothed His message, with a view of being understood at the moment and of being afterwards retained without undue effort or strain. Speaking to men and women who had been overburdened from their childhood with a vast mass of undigested and trivial information about religious matters, He threw out the sublimest thoughts about God, and the soul, and the way of duty,—the most lucid interpretations of the mysteries and difficulties of the spiritual life,—the tenderest expositions and appeals, into a form seemingly as unstudied as the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and yet as beautifully and perfectly expressed as a poet's lyric; at once spontaneous and finished; simple, yet admirably adapted to its purpose. The people were, we are told, "astonished at His teaching"; probably they did not know that its charm and beauty were due to its form as well as its substance. The burden which He laid on the memory was light, and His yoke of instruction was easy. Those who came and listened to His "sweet inevitable words" little realised that, while they made the heart happy as it listened, they had hooks of steel to cling to mind and memory, so that they could never, once heard, be forgotten. The artistic genius which Pheidias put into his sculpture, and Homer into his epic, and the great painters into their pictures, Jesus put into the words in which His teaching is enshrined. Let us see how and in what sense this was so.

7. Conditions of Successful Oral Teaching.—There are five conditions which must be fulfilled by the oral teacher if his instruction is to be easily mastered and retained. It must be simple, vivid, portable, concrete, and so presented that it shall not be readily corrupted either in transmission or in interpretation.

(1) *Simplicity.*—The mind of the expert may be so trained as to delight in complication of form, but simple minds must have simple teaching, or they soon get beyond their depth. If Jesus had intended to train a body of specialists and theologians He would have given them a deep and elaborate exposition of His truth. But His aim was to reach *all*, and therefore His teaching, while profound in suggestion, and vast in scope and outlook, must, in essentials, be capable of presentation in a form within the mental grasp of "babes and sucklings". And so we find that it is marked by wonderful simplicity. This simplicity is noticeable in His illustrations, which are drawn from common everyday facts and experiences, requiring no expert observation in order to identify them, and never containing recondite, scientific or literary allusions. It is noticeable in the diction, the words being taken from the vocabulary of the people, and not from the dictionary of the scholar, or the archaisms of the antiquarian. It is, more than all, noticeable in the occasional reduction of the complexities of duty into a simple formula of conduct, as when the "whole duty of man" is put into the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37, 39). The Gospels teem with instances of this simplification of the laws of life in a manner that must appeal to the intelligence of the least educated mind; and the spiritual relief felt by His hearers, accustomed as they were to the endless complexities of Rabbinical teaching, must have been immeasurable.

(2) *Concreteness.*—Abstract truths are difficult to fix in the memory. "Wise saws" are greatly helped by "modern instances," especially if these are clear-cut and apposite to the case. Jesus followed this method to an extent that shows how deeply impressed He was with its value as an instrument of

teaching. His discourses teem with *examples* embodying a *principle* of conduct. Instead of laying down a general rule, He gives a concrete instance of its application, and leaves His hearers to disentangle the rule from the particular case and apply it for themselves. This gave the hearers something to think of as well as to remember, and the one process helped the other, besides taking them more intimately into the partnership of thought and action. The Sermon on the Mount is throughout pitched in this key of concreteness. Our Lord is there dealing with the general principles of conduct among those who are members of His kingdom. But, instead of uttering abstractions, He passes a series of pictures before the eyes of His hearers. He bids them think, not of vague qualities, such as meekness, spiritual sensitiveness, long-suffering, patience, but of the people who embody these qualities. He throws up the lights of His teaching by means of a contrast with the older Mosaic precepts. He illustrates folly, anger, revengefulness, ostentation, by drawing in brief sharp lines the kind of people who are guilty of these sins. He passes in rapid review a panorama of despicable vices and noble virtues as seen in individual men and women, and in classes. At the close He summarises the effect of His teaching, or its neglect, in the remarkable picture of the two men, one of whom built his house on the rock, the other on the sand. There is thus a vast amount of teaching concentrated into the briefest compass, and yet how clear and sharp and concrete are its outlines, how unforgettable its details, how it haunts the memory and stings the conscience with its unmistakable appeal! The same is true of all the discourses and conversations of the great Teacher. We move through a crowded gallery of ideal portraits in which every one finds his own sins and follies and upward strivings drawn in lines that cannot be dismissed from the mind by any effort,

and which carry the moral assent of the soul at every step.

(3) *Vividness.*—These two features of our Lord's teaching make it *vivid* in the extreme. There is no vagueness of form or substance in these bright and picturesque discourses. We are kept moving among high lights and deep shadows, and even the twilight is full of gleams and flashes of thought. It is easy to forget a rule, but who, for instance, can forget the lesson of neighbourliness embodied in the charming story of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 25-37)? The lawyer who stood up tempting Jesus with the conundrum, "Who is my neighbour?" might have been answered in brief by being told, "He who most needs thy help". Instead of this truism, we have a story in which that law of helpfulness which is of the essence of neighbourly feeling is thrown into splendid relief; imagination and sympathetic feeling are enlisted on the side of the moral judgment to which the final appeal is made. We see the injured man, who is left helpless by the representatives of law and religion, rescued by an alien of another race; we follow the narrative with an interest which belongs to every incident of distress and rescue, and then the unexpected but unavoidable question (ver. 36) is put, which at once takes the tempter captive in his own snare, and which has planted deep in the heart of Christendom the principle of disinterested service for humanity. Thus we might travel through the vivid galleries of the Gospel, and show how perfectly it is adapted for its purpose of indelibly impressing the loftiest teaching on the mind, heart and memory of mankind.

(4) Another feature of this imaginative and pictorial method of teaching was its *portable* character. A long, elaborate train of thought is not easily carried in the mind, however vivid may be its impression at the time of its delivery. Some of its most precious elements may be let fall on the

way through the interstices of the memory. But these short, pithy, pregnant utterances of Jesus are so complete in themselves that they are easily carried away and retained. Doubtless, as we have them, they are still further condensed from what they were in their original form (sometimes to the point of obscurity); but that the discourses of our Lord were thus broken up, each fragment being complete in itself, is unquestionable, and many of them we have doubtless (in the Synoptics) in the precise form of their delivery at the time. The difference between this style of discourse and one more amplified is seen clearly in the contrast between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, in which the evangelist has clearly "edited" the words of Jesus somewhat freely, their characteristic pregnancy and sparkle being largely lost in the process, though there are many cases in which the original form unmistakably survives (*cf.* John iii. 6; iii. 17; iv. 24; iv. 37; ix. 39; xii. 25, etc.). In consequence of this peculiarity the content of the Fourth Gospel is notoriously less easy to commit to memory than that of the other three. In the latter the material is so arranged in detached, easily recollected passages, that their substance, and generally their words, bury themselves ineffaceably in the mind, and reproduce themselves automatically as the call of duty and the events of experience suggest them in the memory. No effort is usually required either to memorise or to recollect them, when fitting occasions arrive to which they are applicable in the hurry and stress of life. They leap full armed into the mind at the touch of the appropriate suggestion.

(5) There is one other feature of Christ's oral method which must be noticed, and which is due to the peculiar circumstances in which He taught. He was often surrounded by a mixed multitude of people, some of whom were friendly, others indifferent but curious, others hostile to Him per-

sonally. In speaking to such crowds He was thus open to every kind of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Many attended on His ministrations, especially towards the close of His life, for the sole purpose of confounding Him in speech—a plan made more easy by His conversational method—and of afterwards twisting His words into an indictable offence before the authorities. A considerable proportion of His recorded utterances were addressed directly to this class, who were usually the emissaries or representatives of the scribes and Pharisees, and so in close league with His public enemies —the priestly party in the State. It was therefore necessary that He should adopt some method of instruction which would safeguard it both from misquotation and misinterpretation. The precious germ of His truth must be enclosed as in a husk or shell which would help to preserve it from ill treatment.

Our Lord achieved this end in a way at once simple and effective. He spoke to the "people" in "parables". It was a feature of these parables that they half-revealed and half-concealed the truth within them. To such as were in sympathy with His aim, these charming stories would present no insurmountable barrier to the realisation of His meaning. The lesson they contained was always within reach of the devout disciple. Puzzling and obscure as certain aspects of them undoubtedly were, they told their own spiritual story with force and directness to such as were open to their appeal. It was indeed an advantage that they demanded close attention, and stimulated curiosity, and called for careful study in order to master their full meaning; the lesson sank deeper, and made a more sure place for itself in heart and memory. But to the unsympathetic hearer these parables presented an insuperable barrier. He could not fathom their meaning. The disciples,

struck with the contrast between their Master's clear and lucid exposition of His truth to them in private, were puzzled by the change in His method when addressing the mixed multitude, and asked Him the reason (Matt. xiii. 10). Our Lord's reply showed (1) that He had a deliberate purpose in adopting this method, and (2) that this purpose had reference to the hostile attitude of the audiences which He often addressed (vers. 13, 15). He put His truth into a form almost impossible to mutilate or traverse. His enemies would hear the stories, would indeed endeavour to fix their form, and repeat them accurately, in their endeavour to fathom their veiled meaning, and would thus give a wider currency to His teaching; but they could not penetrate to their core of meaning, and so could not pervert it. The plan was characterised by a deep wisdom and a sure effectiveness.

The form of the parables was not only useful at the time in meeting the exigencies of His public ministry, but has been of incalculable service also in later times. The great Master has been hindered by His friends as well as His enemies in making known His Gospel. The truth has suffered from misinterpretation from the one side as well as the other. The parables, like all Christ's discourses, have been put through the rack of an unending commentary, much of it profitless and futile in the extreme. But the parables themselves still stand in their original form, and vindicate the wisdom of the Teacher in their appeal to the devout soul. Brief, pregnant, picturesque and portable in form, their inner meaning emerges through all the accumulations of later thought, and finds its home in the teachable heart. They are an unending source of speculation and wonder to the scholar; but they do not fail of their mark in presenting the truths of the kingdom to scholar and simple alike.

8. Summary.—All these characteristics of the

method of Christ's teaching carry out that central principle of "impressive pregnancy," to quote Wendt's phrase, which aimed at "the greatest clearness in the briefest compass". It was an essentially oral style of instruction; and it succeeded in bringing that style to its highest pitch of perfection in form and substance. It was simple, concrete, vivid, portable, and so presented the truths that it could not be readily corrupted either in transmission or in interpretation. Of no other teaching can this be said as of the teaching of Jesus. The effectiveness of the form for the purpose shows clearly that He had studied the possibilities of the oral method with a view of realising its fullest possibilities; and the result is a monument of Divine skill and wisdom in the presentation of the truth, so as to meet the exigencies of the moment, and overcome the imperfections of the human mind in its endeavours to preserve and disseminate it.

CHAPTER III.

THE PICTURE-GOSPEL.

1. Variety of our Lord's Methods.—We will now look a little more in detail at the particular forms into which Jesus threw His oral instruction. Keeping in mind the four characteristics pointed out in the preceding chapter,—simplicity, concreteness, vividness and portability,—these forms will be found to fulfil all the conditions in a way that fills the student with admiration and wonder at the skill and insight of the Master Teacher in handling His material, and in adapting it to the practical needs of His hearers.

2. Forms of Speech.—The external forms of speech used by our Lord included almost every possible method of the illustrative and pictorial handling of truth. Proverbs, pithy and pregnant sayings, paradoxes, apothegms, examples, imagery drawn from every department of life, incidents and historical events, object-lessons as well as parables, follow each other in rapid succession, and turn the pages of the Gospel into a picture-gallery in which the profoundest principles of conduct are bodied forth in unfading colours. Our Lord was keenly observant of the life around Him, and everything He saw became in turn a mirror of truth and duty. In the commonest facts and incidents of daily experience He saw something which reflected the eternal laws of the Kingdom of God.

3. Proverbs.—The proverb has always been a favourite means of storing up an important truth

for the common use of mankind. The practical wisdom of all nations is to be found in their proverbial sayings. There was a great body of such sayings in current use among the Jews. Our Lord often adopted such as were in current use, and made them His own in virtue of the higher uses to which He put them. At other times He threw His own ideas into this crystalline form of speech. It is not always easy to distinguish these two classes, nor is it needful for our purpose. Whether original or adopted, they stand out in the Gospels as an embodiment of His own thought and teaching. To this class of pithy sayings belong such utterances as these: "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. ix. 12); "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (*ib.* ver. 13); "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (*ib.* vii. 16); "A city set on a hill cannot be hid" (*ib.* v. 14); "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (*ib.* vi. 21); "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (*ib.* xi. 15, etc.); "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned" (*ib.* xii. 37); "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it" (*ib.* xvi. 25); "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" (Mark x. 23); "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (*ib.* ver. 27); "The poor ye have with you always" (Matt. xxvi. 11), etc.[1]

4. Paradox.—Closely related to the proverb is the paradox, which may be defined as a saying seemingly at variance with common sense, but which, with proper limitations, resolves itself into a profound

[1] Other instances of proverbial sayings are the following: Matt. vii. 6, 15; ix. 16; xv. 14; xxiii. 16, 24; Mark vii. 27; ix. 50; Luke ix. 60, 62; xii. 32; xxiii. 31; John iii. 6; xiv. 24, 27.

truth. The pragmatic and unimaginative manner in which our Lord's teaching has too often been dealt with has stood greatly in the way of its practical influence; and of nothing is this more true than of His use of this method of instruction. In every paradoxical saying there is a palpable element of exaggeration; the thought is purposely thrown into perplexing and overburdened phraseology in order (1) to force an unwelcome truth on the attention, (2) to make it live in the memory, and (3) to stimulate a thoughtful habit of mind on the part of the disciple whose business it is to disentangle its substance from its shell, and so apply it to the call of duty. Whenever therefore our Lord had a particularly unwelcome but important law of life to enunciate He made a large use of paradox. For this reason His paradoxes should be carefully studied, for they contain many of His most distinctive laws of conduct. In their interpretation there is a call on the "sanctified imagination" in order to distinguish between the form and the substance of the teaching—a faculty lamentably deficient in many commentators. "The letter" of all paradoxical modes of expression "killeth; the spirit maketh alive." Some of the most grotesque formulæ of conduct have been laid down and followed for lack of an intelligent application of this principle of common sense in the interpretation of the teaching of Christ.

5. Some Illustrations.—This point is so important that a few illustrations are needful to enforce it. (1) In Matt. v. 38-42 our Lord gives utterance to no less than four paradoxical sayings in illustration of the law of patience under injury and benevolence in the face of aggression. We are told to turn the "other cheek" to the smiter, to permit the rapacious suitor to take more than he asks for, to go twain with the man who would compel us to go one mile, and to give freely to the man who would ask or borrow anything from us. A literal obedience to

these injunctions is clearly impossible under any conditions of life except those of unqualified martyrdom ; and society would speedily perish if they were made into an absolute rule of conduct for all Christians. And yet the spirit of kindliness and accommodation which they enjoin is manifestly of the essence of the Christian religion. Revengefulness, litigiousness, a selfish sense of *meum* and *tuum*, stinginess of disposition, are all opposed to the Christ-like temper ; and, whereas the stability of society depends on a sane and reasonable defence of personal liberty and possession, its higher interests are best safeguarded by the voluntary surrender of our rights where the well-being of those opposed to us is concerned. Inside these hard sayings there is thus a sweet kernel of practical wisdom. The principle they advocate was in direct opposition to the dominant temper and worldly wisdom of the day ; our Lord therefore throws His teaching into this exaggerated paradoxical form in order to ensure that it should find its way into the intelligence of His auditors, and then into their hearts.

(2) Another paradoxical remark made by our Lord is to be found in John vi. 53 : "Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". This startling utterance perplexed and confounded even His disciples, who said concerning it: "This is an hard saying ; who can hear it ?" The sacerdotal school still quote it in proof of their theory of the transubstantiation (or consubstantiation) of the "elements" in the Lord's Supper. A true exegesis repudiates all connection between this passage and the memorial feast instituted some time afterwards by Jesus, and finds its meaning in the mystical union of Christ and His people, which is so close and vital as to be fitly symbolised by this strong and vivid simile ; furthermore, He Himself gives the key to its interpretation in verse 63, where He shows

that He speaks not of His physical life, but of the spirit of His teaching and of the love which binds Him indissolubly with those who have faith in His name. The tyranny of the letter of Scripture has nowhere shown itself more obtrusively than in the degradation of this passage in the interests of a theory.

(3) A third paradox that may be noted is in the reflection made by Jesus on the inability of the young ruler to obey the condition just laid down of entrance into the kingdom, when He turned His disappointed gaze round about, and, after a pause, said to His disciples: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" (Mark x. 23). Here He Himself furnishes us with the comment which turns the paradox into a truth. Marking the perplexity which His words had caused, expressed in their startled countenances, He adds: "Children, how hard is it for *them that trust in riches* to enter into the Kingdom of God!" At once light was let into the heart of the problem, though even then the disciples showed their inability to follow His meaning. In the same way other paradoxical sayings of Jesus must be considered; we must get behind the exaggerated words, the pregnant form of expression, and grasp the inner sense. The difficulty then vanishes at once, and the self-evidencing laws of the kingdom come home to us with a clearness and a cogency that are impossible to resist.

6. Illustrative Imagery.—We pass now to the consideration of our Lord's illustrations. In these we have the very cream and poetry of imagery. They stand alone for the familiar character of the similes used and the loftiness of the teaching they suggest. The common threads of human life are turned into an embroidered garment, a veritable cloth of gold, in which the warp is of earth and the woof of heaven.

7. Sources of Imagery.—It is instructive to note the breadth and richness of the fields whence these illustrations are drawn. There is scarcely a department of contemporary life, scarcely a field of common observation in nature, which is not in turn put under contribution. The following table shows this at a glance :—

A. Nature and Natural Phenomena. (1) *Inanimate.—Light* (Matt. v. 14; John viii. 2; xii. 35, 36, 46, etc.); *the sun* (Matt. v. 45; xiii. 6, 21, 43); *lightning* (*ib.* xxiv. 27; Luke x. 18); *earthquakes* (Matt. xxiv. 7); *fire* (*ib.* xxv. 41; Mark ix. 43-48; Luke xii. 49; xvi. 23, 24); *clouds* (Matt. xvi. 2, 3; Luke xii. 54); *rain* (Matt. v. 45; vii. 25-7); *storm* (Luke xxi. 25); *mountains* (Matt. v. 14; xvii. 20; xxi. 21, 22).

(2) *Animate.—The camel* (Matt. xxiii. 24); *ox* (Luke xiv. 19); *ass* (*ib.* xiii. 15; xiv. 5); *sheep* (many places); *wolf* (Matt. vii. 15; x. 16; John x. 12); *fox* (Matt. viii. 20; Luke xiii. 32); *dog* (Matt. xv. 26; Luke xvi. 21); *swine* (Matt. vii. 6; Luke xv. 15, 16); *birds* (Matt. x. 16, 29, 31; xiii. 4, 19, 23, 32, 37; xvi. 26 (*cf.* viii. 20); Luke xii. 6, etc.); *serpents* (Matt. x. 16; xii. 34; xxiii. 33, etc.). Of trees and plants, *the sycamore* (black mulberry) (Luke xvii. 6); *the olive* (*ib.* xvi. 6); *the fig* (Matt. xxi. 19; Luke xiii. 6-7); *the mustard* (Matt. xiii. 31, 32; xvii. 20); *mint, anise* and *cummin* (*ib.* xxiii. 23); *the lily* (*ib.* vi. 28-30); *thorns*, etc. (*ib.* vii. 16; Luke vi. 44); *the reed* (Matt. xi. 17).

B. Human Life. (1) *The Body.—Flesh* and *blood* (Matt. xvii. 17; John vi. 51, 53-54); *the eye* (Matt. vi. 22-23; xiii. 16; Mark vi. 22); *the ear* (Matt. xi. 15; xiii. 9, 42); *hands* and *feet* (*ib.* v. 29, 30; xviii. 8, 9, etc.); *cheek* (*ib.* v. 39). *Hunger* and *thirst* (*ib.* v. 6; John iv. 14; vii. 37); *laughing, mourning* and *weeping* (Matt. viii. 2; xiii. 42, 50, etc.; Luke vi. 25); *sleep* (Matt. ix. 24; xxv. 5; John xi. 11-14). *Sickness* of various kinds (too numerous to detail);

blindness (Matt. ix. 12; xv. 14); *death* (*ib.* viii. 22; xxiii. 27, etc.).

(2) *Home and Household Occupations.*—*Houses* (Matt. vi. 6, 20; viii. 7; x. 27; xxiv. 17, 43; Luke xiii. 25, etc.); *furnishings* (*lamp*, Matt. v. 15, 16; Mark iv. 21; John v. 35; *cf.* Matt. xxv. 1-4; *seats*, Matt. viii. 11; xxiii. 6); *food* and *cooking* (Matt. xiii. 33; xv. 26; xvi. 6, 12; xviii. 6; xxiv. 41); *bread* (*ib.* vi. 11; xxvi. 26, etc.; John vi. 33-35, 51). *Birth* (John iii. 3; xvi. 21-22). *Natural relationships* (Matt. x. 35-36; xii. 50; Luke xv. 13). *Sleep* (Luke xi. 7; xvii. 34). *Service* (Matt. xxiv. 45; Luke xii. 42; xxii. 27; John xii. 14-15; xv. 15).

(3) *Pastoral and Agricultural Life.*—*Shepherds*, etc. (Matt. xviii. 12-14; xxv. 32-33; xxvi. 31; Luke xii. 32, etc.; John x. 3, 7, 9, etc.; xxi. 15-17); *husbandmen* (Matt. ix. 38; xx. 1, 8, 9; xxi. 28, 33; Luke xvii. 7-10; John xv. 1); *the soil and its tillage* (Matt. xiii. 4-8; Luke ix. 62); *sowing* (Matt. xiii. 3, 25-30, 38; Luke viii. 11); *growth* (Mark xii. 26-29; John xii. 24); *harvest* (Matt. xiii. 39; xxv. 24; Mark iv. 29; Luke xii. 17-18; John iv. 35, 38); *vineyard* (John xv. 1-5); *wine* (Matt. ix. 17).

(4) *Trade.*—*Fisherman* (Matt. iv. 19; xiii. 47-49; Luke v. 4, 10; John xxi. 6); *tailor* (Matt. ix. 16); *builder* (*ib.* vii. 24-27; Luke xiv. 28-29); *merchant* (Matt. xiii. 45-46; *cf.* vii. 6); *business* (Matt. vii. 2; Luke xiv. 18, 19; xvi. 1-9; *cf.* Luke vii. 38); *debts* (Matt. vi. 12, 15; xviii. 35; Luke vii. 41-43; xix. 13).

(5) *Civil and National Affairs.*—*Robbery* (Luke x. 30, etc.); *violence* (Matt. xxi. 35-39); *judgment* (*ib.* v. 21, 22, 25, 39, 40; Luke xviii. 2-8; *cf.* xii. 14, 15); *punishment* (Matt. v. 26; xxv. 46; John v. 27). *Taxes* (Matt. xxi. 31; xxii. 21).

(6) *Social Customs.*—*Marriage* (Matt. ix. 15; xxv. 1, etc.); *hospitality* (*ib.* x. 11; Mark ix. 50; Luke xix. 52-56); *feasts* (Matt. xxii. 3, 4; Luke vii. 44-46; xiv. 16, 17). *Salutations* (Luke x. 4). *Journeying* (Matt. x. 9, 10, 14).

(7) *Religious Life.*—*Prayer* (Matt. vi. 5; xxi. 22, 23, 25; Luke xi. 8, 9; xviii. 1-8); *alms* (Matt. vi. 2); *tithes* (Matt. xv. 5, 6); *fasting* (*ib.* vi. 16-18); *Sabbath* (*ib.* xii. 5; John vii. 22, 23, etc.); *temple* (John ii. 19, 21; xiv. 2) and many others.[1]

8. Human Interest of these Similes.—Glancing back at this table, one of the first features that emerges is the human interest of the illustrations used by our Lord. He seldom used imagery of a purely natural kind, *i.e.*, drawn from the impersonal operations of physical forces; there is nearly always some human agent or sufferer in view whose action or suffering invests the simile with a sympathetic as well as intellectual aspect. The springing of seed, for instance, the rising of leaven, the secret growing of corn, are associated with the sower, the housewife, the expectant husbandman. Nature is interesting to Him only as the handiwork of God and the mirror of His perfections or providential care for His creatures, or as the theatre of human joys and sorrows. The cold impersonal attitude of the modern scientist towards creation was impossible to the Lover of Souls. Nature is the vehicle of truth as applied to conduct; she is a bundle of analogies in the sense of the poet:—

> Two worlds are ours, 'tis sin alone
> Forbids us to descry
> The mystic earth and heaven within,
> Plain as the sea and sky.

In this way our view of nature is beautifully enriched and impregnated with higher meanings; and her operations resolve themselves into a series of delightful reminders of human duty and of the Divine love.

9. Didactic Use.—A second feature lies in the didactic rather than the æsthetic use of analogy.

[1] This list is compiled from Resker's admirable little work on *Our Lord's Illustrations* (T. & T. Clark).

It is art applied to conduct. There are no flights of poetic imagery for the mere joy of dwelling on the correspondence of the physical and the ideal worlds; but a practical use of it in order to enforce the laws of the spiritual life. Much of the charm of modern poetry lies in its sensuous quality; but while there is abundance of true poetic thought and music of phrase in our Lord's discourses (*cf.* Matt. vi. 28; xxiii. 37) we often feel the repression of the exquisitely delicate sense of rhythm which He possessed so that the ethical lesson might not be obscured by the mere embroidery of form. Some of His parables are perfect in their artistic workmanship, *e.g.*, those of the Virgins, the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, but nowhere is the teaching lost sight of in the presentation. Beautiful and balanced as is the form, it is the truth embodied in them that stands out most prominently, and clings longest to the memory.

10. Examples.—One of our Lord's most effective methods of enforcing general rules of conduct was by means of *examples*. We have already dealt with this point in the previous chapter in illustrating the *concreteness* of His teaching, but a few more references will help to make it clearer. One of the most impressive instances is to be found in the discourse on prayer (Luke xviii. 1-14), which takes the form of the narrative-parables of the Unjust Judge and of the Pharisee and the Publican. The lesson taught in the first is the importance of a spirit of perseverance in prayer; in the second, the essential place of humility in approaching God. In both the truth is enforced by vivid contrasts of character. The truculent and hardened character of the judge is used to throw up the benevolence and grace of God towards those who belong to Him; the self-righteous, inflated Pharisee becomes a foil to the self-abased, repentant publican. No abstract statement could possibly carry home so effectually the right attitude

of the soul in spiritual supplication as these pregnant illustrations do in a few unforgettable sentences. Another charming instance is to be found in the story of the Widow's Two Mites (Mark xii. 41 ff.). Here again contrast is called in to make the principle of consecrated giving clear. The rich men and the poverty-stricken lonely woman; their large offerings, her two "farthings"; their seeming generosity, neutralised by the fact that they only gave of their "superfluity"; her self-sacrifice, shown in giving "all her living" (and incidentally in that she gave *two* coins, one of which she might have well kept for her own crying needs); all these features of the case throw into splendid relief the truth that the value of our gifts lies in their *cost to us*, and not in their objective amount. This list of illustrative examples could be indefinitely increased; the reader would do well to draw one out for his own benefit.

11. Lessons from Current Events.—Many of our Lord's characteristic utterances were drawn from contemporary history. He never failed to obsevre and to use the everyday happenings around Him as vehicles of spiritual truth. The luxury of the court of Herod Antipas (*cf.* Farrar's *Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 389) furnished an illustration (by way of contrast) of the simplicity and abstinence of John the Baptist's mode of life (Matt. xi. 8; Luke vii. 25); the slaughter of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and the fall of the tower at Siloam, gave Him telling opportunities to correct current opinions as to the special culpability of the victims of great natural disasters or political disturbance (Luke xiii. 1 ff.). The defeat of Herod the Tetrarch's troops by Aretas is possibly alluded to in Luke xiv. 31, 32, by way of illustrating the folly of entering rashly on religious plans and enterprises—a lesson further enforced by Pilate's failure to complete an aqueduct which he had begun without "counting the cost"

(*ib.* vers. 28, 29). It is likely that the parable of the Good Samaritan is based on an actual event in the hill-country between Jerusalem and Jericho, which was infested by dangerous bands of robbers; and that of the nobleman who "went into a far country" to claim a kingdom, on an incident which was still vivid in the minds of His contemporaries in the life of Archelaus, son of Herod (Luke xix. 12).[1]

12. Object-Lessons.—Sometimes Jesus combined "exemplification by word" with "exemplification by action". His whole life, indeed, was a vivid and complete embodiment of His teaching; in Him "the word was made flesh" not only as a general principle, but in detail (*cf.* John xiii. 15). As Wendt points out (*The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 114), "in certain cases He employed certain acts for the sole purpose of illustrating His teaching". Examples are found in Mark ix. 33-37, where He takes a child in His arms, and shows how such an act may be invested with deep spiritual significance; in Matthew xviii. 2, where He sets a little child "in the midst" of His disciples for the same purpose; in Luke xxii. 17, where He "takes the cup" and waits on the disciples as their cup-bearer; in John xiii. 2-12, where He washes His disciples' feet, afterwards solemnly interpreting the act as an indication of

[1] "Herod the Great by his will left Judæa, Idumæa and Samaria to his son Archelaus; but as the appointment had to be confirmed by the Roman Emperor, the latter set out for Rome 'to receive his kingdom'. He was, however, followed by a deputation of fifty Jews to protest against it, and to ask for the incorporation of Judæa and Syria as a Roman province. Archelaus, however, received his investiture as ethnarch, with the promise of being made king after a time. On his return to Jerusalem he deposed the high-priest, and Josephus states that he 'used not the Jews only, but the Samaritans also, barbarously'. These events occurred early in our Lord's life; but they were still fresh in men's minds when, on our Lord passing through Jericho, where Herod had a palace, He uttered the parable" (*Our Lord's Illustrations*, p. 120).

the spirit of willing service which they owe to one another in His name. Closely related to these instances were the numerous cases where He performs an act of healing or kindness, and draws out of it some vivid lesson or points an important truth. Peter's commission to be a "fisher of men" was given him after the miraculous draught of fishes on Lake Gennesaret (Luke v. 10); the lesson of faith was impressively taught in the incident of walking on the sea (Matt. xiv. 31); the close relation between sin and disease on the one side, and of the Lord's power on the other to forgive sin as well as to cure sickness, was exemplified in the healing of the man with a withered hand (Luke v. 18-26); the action-parable of the Blasted Fig-tree is best understood as an object-lesson in which the act was justified entirely by the lesson which it was meant to embody. Other cases in which miracles are used as vehicles for teaching are those of the man with the withered hand (Matt. xii. 10 ff.); the Blind Man whose story is told in John ix. 1 ff.; the Ten Lepers (Luke xvii. 12 ff.); the Infirm Woman (*ib.* xiii. 11 ff.); the Man Cured of Dropsy (*ib.* xiv. 1 ff.). The chief practical value to us of all these miracles is the illustrations which they embody of the laws of the spiritual life and of the Kingdom of God. It is one of the *differentiæ* of the miracles of Christ as a whole that they are thus interwoven with the teaching. Most of them are not only deeds of mercy, but "parables in action" of the higher life; probably the record of many of them would not have been preserved for us at all, but for some characteristic words spoken by Jesus as He performed them. The evidential value of this fact in witnessing to the reality of the miracles is great. Apart from the event, the words could not have taken the form in which we find them; the teaching and the acts thus help to substantiate each other's historicity.

13. Comparisons.—We now pass on to consider a very important branch of our Lord's sayings, which have come to us in the form of *comparisons*. "The Kingdom of Heaven is *like unto*"—is one of His favourite forms of expression. He was filled with the sense of the analogy of things material with things spiritual; and He lost no opportunity of unfolding these analogies. The double appeal contained in them to sense and understanding was of immense value, both in making His teaching interesting and comprehensible, and in ensuring a vivid and abiding recollection of His ideas among His hearers. Some of these similes are contained in brief, vigorous sentences; others are developed in greater detail, and constitute a class by themselves under the special term—*parable*. Leaving the latter for more complete treatment in the next chapter, we will here consider the sententious form in which many of His similes have come down to us.

14. Pregnant Comparisons.—In every comparison there are two members—the "type" and the "antitype". It is characteristic of the method of Jesus that these are seldom actually expressed; the two being, as it were, rolled into one, and given in a pregnant form out of which the elements can be easily disentangled and laid side by side.[1] That this form of expression is original to Jesus, and not due to the compressed way in which His sayings are reported, is proved by the perplexity into which it sometimes threw the disciples. For instance, when Jesus said to them one day, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," we are told that they were greatly exercised as to what He meant (Mark viii. 16), their pragmatic attitude calling out His pointed rebuke (vers. 17, 18); and in the parallel passage

[1] This is applicable mainly to the class of brief comparisons; in the parables the parallelism is often introduced by the words: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto . . . "

(Matt. xvi. 12) we find them at last coming with a shock of surprised recognition to the discovery of His real meaning. Other instances of these pregnant comparisons are the following: "The Son of Man is come to give His life a *ransom for many*" (Mark x. 45); "When thou doest alms, *sound not a trumpet* before thee," etc. (Matt. vi. 2 ff.); "Go ye to the *lost sheep* of the house of Israel" (*ib.* x. 6); "The good man out of *his treasure* bringeth forth good things" (*ib.* xii. 35); "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and *are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest: take My *yoke* upon you and learn of Me" (*ib.* xi. 28 ff.); "Let the *dead bury* their dead" (Luke ix. 60); "Fear not little flock" (*ib.* xii. 32); "Go ye and tell *that fox*" (*ib.* xiii. 32); "*By their fruits* ye shall *know them*," etc. (Matt. vii. 16-20); "Have *salt in yourselves*" (Mark ix. 50); "They be *blind leaders of the blind*," etc. (Matt. xv. 14); "*Destroy this temple*, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19); "John was a *burning and a shining* light," etc. (*ib.* v. 35; *cf.* Matt. v. 13, 14, 15); "I am the *bread of life*" (John vi. 35); "The *light of the world*" (*ib.* viii. 12); "*The way*" (*ib.* xiv. 6); "In My Father's house *there are many mansions*" (*ib.* xiv. 2); "I will not leave you *orphans*" (*ib.* xiv. 18). Many of these similes seem to have been lost at the time on the minds of His hearers, though their vivid phases remained indelibly imbedded in their memory, the inner meaning being hidden like the seed in the soil, to germinate into clear realisation after many days; and in one instance this pregnant method of speech came to a tragic result, His saying regarding the rebuilding of the temple in three days leading directly to the charge of blasphemy which brought about His crucifixion (Matt. xxvi. 61, 62). It is specially significant that in the only words uttered by our Lord before the high-priest, another such simile turned the charge into a sentence of conviction (*cf.* vers. 64-66). This shows that His love of

comparisons was deeply rooted. It was indeed one of His mental characteristics that He naturally clothed His ideas in similes, so that His spontaneous thoughts came forth in this form even under circumstances of stress and emotion (*cf. ib.* xxiii. 37; Luke x. 18; John iv. 35-38).

15. **Expanded Similes.**—For the most part Jesus did not develop or explain the spiritual meaning of His symbolic utterances, preferring to let them tell their own story to the reverent and inquiring mind. There are, however, some cases in which He carefully interpreted His comparisons. We have already noted one instance in the scene concerning the "leaven of the Pharisees"; another is found in Mark vii. 17-23. In other cases the interpretation is found in the form of a development of the spiritual idea underlying the comparisons. This "allegorical expansion" of the simile is found in many passages in the Synoptists, and is specially frequent in the discourses of the fourth evangelist (though in the latter it is not always easy to disentangle our Lord's words from the writer's own reflections). See, by way of example, the sayings concerning the strait gate (Matt. vii. 13 ff.); the good and the corrupt trees (*ib.* vers. 17-19); the mote and the beam (*ib.* vers. 3-6); the man who, having put his hand to the plough, looked back (Luke ix. 62). Sometimes in drawing His conclusions from a comparison, He uses further terms of the comparison itself, as in the case of the Syro-phœnician woman (Mark vii. 27); the blind leading the blind (Matt. xv. 14); the girded loins and the burning lamp (Luke xii. 35 ff.); the perishable and the everlasting meat (John vi. 27); the bread of life (*ib.* vi. 35); the light of the world (*ib.* viii. 12); the many mansions (*ib.* xiv. 6), and many others. By this means the unsuspected riches of the symbolic idea is unfolded, and the mind is kept in a happy play of movement which greatly enhances the interest and the impressiveness of the teaching.

CHAPTER IV.

ON TEACHING BY PARABLES.

1. Importance of Parables.—Passing from the briefer forms of imagery used by Jesus, we now come to those comparisons which take a more detailed and elaborate form, and which are called *Parables*. A considerable portion of the teaching is thrown into these vivid and characteristic stories; and it is of the utmost importance that we should know the use to which He put them, the limits of their application and the laws governing their interpretation. For lack of clear ideas on this subject the course of exegesis has been greatly hampered. The history of the art of interpretation is full of extravagances and futilities; and of no department is this more painfully true—as has been already pointed out—than of the parables of our Lord.

2. Four Kinds of Narrative-Similes.—We must distinguish between four kinds of narratives in which religious ideas have from time to time been embodied—myths or legends, fables, allegories, and parables. They are all the fruit of the constructive imagination. In the case of myths or legends the process of invention is unconscious and instinctive; in the case of fables, allegories, and parables, it is conscious and deliberate. This primary distinction is of some importance to a right understanding of the various religions of the world, and of many parts of Holy Writ.

3. Myth, Fable, Allegory, Parable—how Distinguished.—All these forms of speech derive their

chief significance from the fact that they embody religious or moral truth in the form of a narrative. But they differ in the character of the story, and in the closeness with which the truth suggested is interwoven with it. In *myths* the truth and its vehicle are identified; at the time of their formation there was no sense of distinction between them. "The mythic narrative presents itself not only as the vehicle of the truth, but as itself being the truth" (Trench). In the three other forms the story is distinguished from the truth embodied in it; it is a conscious fiction, as the myth is an unconscious fiction; the lesson is not understood to be less true because the story is recognised to be imaginary.[1] A *fable* differs from allegories and parables in that the story makes no claim to any verisimilitude of its own; in it inanimate objects are clothed with life, the lower creatures are endowed with reason and other human attributes, and situations palpably absurd are freely used for a didactic purpose. Both allegories and parables, on the other hand, always present us with stories that might have happened; there is no confusion of the possible with the grotesque; and they move chiefly in the region of human action and experience. Even when natural processes are used for the sake of the analogy they are usually brought into relation with some aspect of human life (*cf.* the parables of the Leaven which "a *woman took* and hid in three measures of meal"; of the Seed which the "sower went forth to sow"; of the Tares; of the Lost Sheep which the shepherd

[1] Of course in ages of reflection no one imagines *myths* to be historically true; the teaching alone has validity, and that only as giving a picture of the beliefs of mankind in the myth-forming ages. "It is somewhat curious to mark the different fortunes of the words *myth* and *parable*, each of which represents an alliance of truth and fiction, though in the first we remember only the fiction, and in the second only the truth" (*The Message of Israel*, by Julia Wedgwood, p. 175).

sought, etc.). Both allegories and parables are thus specially suited to be vehicles of *spiritual* truth, whereas the lessons conveyed by fables are always of the worldly-wise, *prudential* order. The only two fables in the Bible (that of the Trees which would choose a King, Jud. ix. 8-15, and of the Thistle and the Cedar, 2 Kings xiv. 9) answer to this description; and for this reason we find that the fable has no place in Scripture in the inculcation of spiritual truth in the proper sense of the term.

4. Allegory and Parable.—When we inquire into the further distinction between the *allegory* and the *parable*, we find it in the relation between the parts of the story and the truth suggested by it. An allegory is a fictitious "narrative, in which, by way of illustration, an event is figuratively described, and in which, therefore, an ingenious meaning can be drawn out of every detail" (Wendt). See, for allegorical language, Genesis xlix. 9; Numbers xxiv. 8, 9; Ezekiel xvii. 3-10, where the great eagle is Nebuchadnezzar. Parables, on the other hand, are rather comparisons "whereby a familiar relation or mode of conduct serves as a basis on which to found some judgment or parallel rule in regard to a relation or mode of conduct in a different [and higher] sphere, yet so that the analogy shall hold good only in one important particular, whilst the remaining details may present no analogy," their purpose being to give the narrative an element of picturesqueness and the spiritual lesson additional force and vividness.[1] To this all-important point

[1] Trench (*Notes on the Parables*, popular ed., pp. 9, 10) finds the distinction between parable and allegory to consist in another feature. In the allegory there is an "interpenetration of the thing signifying and the thing signified finding place, the qualities and properties of the first thing being transferred to the last, and the two being thus blended together, instead of being kept quite distinct, and placed side by side, as in the parable".

we shall presently return in considering the laws of parabolic interpretation.

5. Ambiguity of Term Parable.—The use of the word *parable* in Scripture is somewhat loose. In Ezekiel xvii. 3-10 it covers what might be better described as an *allegory* (see also John x. 6); while in 1 Samuel xxiv. 13, etc., and in Luke iv. 23, what is called a parable is more properly a proverb or proverbial expression. On the other hand, in John xvi. 25-29 *parables* and *proverbs* are spoken of as though they were the same thing, and for a similar transposition of meaning see also Luke iv. 23. This popular use of the terms is due partly to the fact that in Hebrew the same word was used for both forms of similitude, which have a certain resemblance in that they are alike "dark" or cryptic sayings, uttering a part of their meaning and leaving the rest to be inferred; while many proverbs are distinctly parabolic in form, being in fact concise and condensed parables. It is to be noted that while two Greek words (*paroimia* and *parabolé*) are used in the Gospels to represent this one Hebrew word (mashal), both these New Testament words are translated indifferently in the A. V. by *proverb* and by *parable* (*e.g.*, thus *parable* does duty for *parabolé* in Matt. xxi. 36, and for *paroimia* in John x. 6; while *proverb* similarly does duty for the same two words in Luke iv. 23 and John xvi. 25).

6. Our Lord's Parables Distinctive.—In spite of this confusion in the use of terms, there is a clearly defined meaning of the word *parable* as applied to certain discourses and briefer analogies in the teaching of our Lord. These are all to be found in the Synoptics, the analogical stories in the Fourth Gospel being rather allegorical than parabolic in form. They are always characterised by the same qualities of picturesqueness and charm of form, and the same happy correspondence between type and antitype. This method of teaching Jesus

made peculiarly His own, and brought to a perfection that has never been elsewhere approached.[1] He put His choicest truths into His parables, being drawn to their use not only by His own preference for figurative language, but also by the peculiar exigencies of the situation.

7. Sources of Parable-Material.—A classification of the parables as to subject and substance is beside the object of this handbook, but there are clearly marked distinctions of form which come within its scope. As to the source of the comparisons, we find that some are drawn from family relationships and events (the Great Supper, Two Sons, Marriage of the King's Son, Virgins, etc.); others from household facts and operations (the Leaven, Importunate Friend, Householder and his Treasures, New Cloth on an old Garment, Candle under a Bushel, etc.); others from the relation of master and servant, or king and subject (the Wicked Husbandmen, Tower, Warring King, Talents, Pounds and Pennies, Labourers in Vineyard, etc.); others from the sphere of human industry, trade and commerce (the Sower, Growing Seed, Drag-net, Hid Treasure, Pearl of Great Price, Master and Servant, Unjust Steward, Two Builders); others from natural operations of growth or decay (Mustard Seed, Tares, Barren Fig-tree, Salt of the Earth, Fig-tree putting forth Leaves, New Wine in old Bottles, etc.); while such parables as the Rich Fool, Dives and Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, are idyllic presentations of typical situations and events in human life and destiny.

8. Parallelism in Parables.—The parables have been distinguished into two classes as regards the

[1] "The early Christians have not infrequently been credited with inventing the miracles, but the man would only betray his own intellectual and literary incapacity who ventured to say that they invented the parables" (Stalker's *Christology of Jesus*, p. 40).

kind of parallelism contained in them. In the first class this is more prominent. The narrative moves in two planes—one the story itself, the other the truth which it is sought to convey; the essence here lies in the parallelism. For instances, we may turn to the parables contained in Matthew xiii. (or Mark 4). In the other group there is no obvious parallelism, but the scene or the history is just a typical example of the spiritual principle which it is sought to illustrate, as in the cases of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the Publican. Here the truth stands out by "first intention," and does not need to be translated from lower terms into higher. The human interest of the stories helps to drive the Divine lesson home with vivid emphasis and impressive force.

9. Another Classification. — Another formal difference lies in the fact that in some of the parables the reference is to a natural event or fact of human intercourse or conduct, "not as a separate concrete case, but as giving a rule in frequently recurring cases" (Wendt); while in other instances it refers "not to some frequently recurring general fact, but to a single event which has occurred in quite definite circumstances". The former class is comprised of brief sentences, such as: "The whole have no need of a physician, but the sick" (Mark ii. 17); "No man soweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment," etc. (ver. 21 ff.); "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house" (iii. 27). Other instances occur in Mark iii. 24; iv. 21; vii. 27; xiii. 28; also iv. 26-29, 31 ff.; Matt. vii. 9, 16 ff.; x. 24 ff.; Luke xvii. 7-10, 31; John iii. 8; xi. 10; xii. 24; xiii. 16; xvii. 21; also the "parables" in John x. 1-13. The second class comprises the mere formal and detailed parables. The narratives belong to pure fancy, though they

always deal with such events as might at any time happen in the course of human experience, as, for instance, those of the Sower (Mark iv. 3), the Unfaithful Husbandmen (xii. 1), the Builders on Rock and Sand (Matt. vii. 24 ff.), the Unforgiving Servant (xviii. 23 ff.), the Two Sons (xxi. 28 ff.), and the Prodigal Son (Luke xv. 11 ff.); others will readily occur to the reader.

10. The Purpose of Parable Teaching.—When we ask why our Lord made so large a use of parables we find that they fulfilled a threefold purpose. They were *explicative*, aiming at the unfolding of spiritual truth in a memorable and pictorial way. They were *stimulative*, being a challenge to curiosity and provocative of study and thoughtfulness. And they were *cryptic*, serving to veil the truth from those unfitted to receive it, or who wished to know it only that they might misrepresent its meaning and defeat its influence.

(1) Puzzling as the parables are in many of their aspects, even after centuries of painstaking and devoted study, there can be no doubt that their first purpose is to enshrine and enforce the truths of the Gospel. They were a part of our Lord's revelation of the Divine will and of human duty, and it is the purpose of revelation, not to hide, but to make clear and plain. And whatever the uncertainties and limitations of the form, the practical lessons of all the parables are so plain that he who runs may read them. "We seem to be placed for a moment at the very centre of things: on the one hand there is laid bare before us the human heart as it is or ought to be, with all its perversities and affectations stripped away; and on the other hand we seem to be admitted to the secret council chamber of the Most High, and to have revealed to us the plan by which He governs the world, and the threads in all the tangled skein of being" (Sanday, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, ii., 617, 618).

(2) If the substance of the parabolic teaching is pure revelation, the form is distinctly provocative of reflection and inquiry. In this veiled method of teaching the Master thus takes the pupil into a noble companionship of thought. There is something infinitely precious given, but, to be appropriated, it must also be sought. Truth is never adequately valued except as it is personally discovered and mastered. This is the secret of all learning. Its fullest reward can only be given to the open heart and the patient mind, bent on delving into its innermost mystery. This is what our Lord meant when He solemnly said to His disciples: "*Take heed how ye hear:* with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given," etc. (Mark iv. 24, 25). In proportion to the zeal and devotion of the learner will come the reward of knowledge, and only at the price of severe spiritual self-discipline will full enlightenment be attained. This is true of all intellectual effort; and especially is it true of that kind of study which demands the co-ordination of the spiritual with the mental elements of our nature.

(3) The cryptic function of the parables has been already dealt with in summing up the various aspects of the oral teaching (*vide supra*, p. 57). Parabolic instruction is truth revealed, but "half-concealed," with a definite purpose of stimulating the immature to a deeper insight and of defeating the sinister efforts of the hostile to misrepresent the teacher. With the former class Jesus bore with unfailing patience and love, paying court to their dawning spiritual intelligence, dwelling on the simplicities of faith with ever fresh alternations of form and emphasis, and watching for the time when they would be capable of rising into higher levels of spiritual companionship. It was a part of His cross in life that His closest followers were so tardy in their progress. "I have many things yet to say unto

you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12), expresses a deep experience of self-restraint and disappointment, which received more emphatic expression in the words: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke xxiv. 25). But He never failed in His gentle regard and unwavering kindliness towards those who were anxious to learn, and He adapted His methods to their gradually expanding intelligence: "And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it; . . . and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples" (Mark iv. 33, 34). As to the unsympathetic and hostile classes, we know that it was part of the definite plan of Jesus that the truth should be concealed from them as far as possible (on the principle enunciated in Matt. vii. 6), and, as we have seen, the parabolic form was admirably adapted to this end.

11. The Principle of Interpretation.—The difference between the allegory and the parable has already been suggested. They are both stories or situations with a spiritual meaning. In the allegory the meaning is to be discovered by investigating the details, and finding an analogy between each particular in turn and the spiritual order of which it is the physical picture. In the *Pilgrim's Progress*, for instance, which is the finest and most complete of all well-known allegories, we see the parallelism at every step. Each incident has its meaning, not only as emphasising a general truth, but as embodying a particular truth of its own. From the start of the journey for the City of Destruction to the opening of the gate of the City of the Blessed at last, the narrative keeps pace with the spiritual experience of the individual believer on his pathway to heaven. All this is changed in the case of the parable. The details of the story have no special meaning apart from the one central lesson which has to be enforced,

whether it be some fresh aspect of the love and grace of God or a new point of human duty to be attended to.

12. Rival Schools of Interpretation.—It is well to remember, however, that though this distinction has been pointed out from the earliest times, it has by no means commanded universal assent. There have always been two schools of exegetes, represented by those commentators on the one side who have allegorised all the parables, expending an immense amount of pains and ingenuity in their endeavours to decipher the significance of the minutest details of the narrative; and by those on the other who have been content to emphasise the central truth signified, considering that the particulars are mere drapery and ornament, and not the vehicle of essential truth. Tertullian, Chrysostom, Origen, and to some extent Augustine (who, however, fell at times into the allegorical vices of his day), represented the latter view; while Jerome, Bernard, Cocceius, and most of the mediæval commentators, followed by Calvin, Edward Irving, Storr, Krummacher, and others in modern times, advocated the allegorical method of interpretation. Dogmatic affirmation on either side is out of count in view of these facts; at the same time the simplicity of the one method, its direct practical results, contrasted with the extravagancies, and even the absurdities of interpretation often indulged in by the advocates of the other, are in themselves a strong argument in favour of adhering to the parabolic method properly so-called. Probably the truth lies between these extremes, and while some of the parables (*e.g.*, that of the Sower and a few others) lend themselves to a modified allegorical application, there are others to which that method is totally unsuitable, and even leads to serious ethical difficulties.

13. Some Illustrations.—For instance, in the parables of the Vineyard, the Talents and Pounds, the

Unjust Steward, the Unjust Judge, and others, the allegorical method demands some explanation as to what is meant by the various personages of the story. Does our Lord mean that the householder who hires men for his vineyard, the master who accepts the charge that he is "a hard" man, the dishonest steward, the hardened magistrate, represent the Heavenly Father in His dealings with men? Does the moral behaviour of the man who hid his discovery of treasure, and then bought the field in which he had found it, of the wise virgins who showed no sympathy or pity for their foolish sisters, of the odious steward who defrauded his master in order to cover his own failure to retain his post, of the lethargic man who declines to give his friend in his need the required loaves, afford a parallel to anything in the Kingdom of God? On the allegorical method these questions are bound to rise; and it has consequently caused some writers to charge the parables with teaching immoral doctrine.[1] If, on the other hand, we adopt the other explanation, these difficulties do not occur. Our Lord chose these illustrations out of the sphere of actual life; the character of His personages does not enter into the problem at all; they are simply illustrations drawn freshly from common experience, without alteration or extenuation. In real life most men are more or less dishonest—or, at any rate, fail in straightforwardness, in unselfishness, in justice to their fellows; and so they do in the parables. This gives them a vivid human interest without in any way detracting from the enforcement of the one central lesson which they were invented to enforce. Sometimes by means of a striking contrast, sometimes by an analogy from the less to the greater, sometimes by a close parallelism of conduct, the salient feature

[1] *E.g.*, the late Professor Huxley brought such a charge against the parable of the Unjust Steward.

of the story illustrates a law of the spiritual life, or helps to make clear some mystery of the Divine procedure. The golden rule is to find the practical lesson to be enforced, and to concentrate the attention on that. The details will then be found to lead up to it by a simple and natural process, and all over-refinements of interpretation will be avoided without difficulty.

14. Scriptural Hints as to Interpretation.—A true understanding of the parabolic teaching is much facilitated by careful study of the context. Tertullian puts this point into a sentence. "You will find," he writes, "no parable which is not either interpreted by Christ Himself, as that of the Sower, which finds its meaning in the ministry of the Word; or explained beforehand by the author of the Gospel, as in the parable of the Proud Judge and the Urgent Widow, in its reference to perseverance in prayer; or may be freely conjectured, as in the parable of the Fig-tree, whose spreading branches aroused expectation, with its likeness to the unfruitfulness of the Jews."[1]

15. Theological Uses of Parables.—There is one more hint of some importance which it would be well to make as regards the function of our Lord's parables. They are not to be regarded as primary sources of doctrine, but rather as illustrations of doctrines otherwise affirmed or proved to be true. It is a recognised axiom, "In theology parables do not count as arguments". They are "the outward ornamental fringe, but not the main texture of the proof". Some of the worst extravagancies of theological writers have arisen from neglect of this rule. It is always easy to take one's meaning *into* Scripture under the pretext of *finding* it there (in the quaint

[1] For illustrative references see Matt. xxii. 14; xxv. 13; Luke xv. 1, 2; xvi. 9; xviii. 1, 9; xix. 11. See also Matt. xviii. 23; xx. 1-15; Luke xii. 15.

words of Jerome, "to twist to our own will a contrary Scripture"); and there is a special temptation to take the single aspect of a truth presented in a parable, and treat it as though it were the whole truth. Thus the parable of the Prodigal Son, which presents in a very impressive way one of the most beautiful aspects of the Divine forgiveness, and that of the Unmerciful Servant, which contains another, have severally done duty to "prove" the superfluous character of the idea of Atonement, which is to do them and the cause of religious thought a grievous injustice. The Manichæans and Gnostics were guilty of the most extraordinary vagaries of interpretation in this kind, and some of the ancient fathers were little better; in more recent days Swedenborg sinned much against the simplicity of the Gospel teaching in his exposition of the truth. This fault is one that many commentators and preachers commit unconsciously; our latent prejudices as well as our overt preferences make it hard to avoid it. All such complications and involutions of phrase and meaning were quite foreign to the mind of the Master; His mental habit was invariably lucid and direct, and the simplest meanings are always to be sought in His words in preference to such as are remote and far-fetched.

PART III.

THE APPLICATION.

CHAPTER I.

STAGES IN THE TEACHING.

1. Every True Teacher is Practical. — The work of a teacher is always practical. He deals with truth always in its personal relations. His aim is not only to clothe his message in certain appropriate forms, but to adapt these forms to the needs and idiosyncrasies of the persons whom he teaches. Incidentally we have already seen how deeply Jesus was absorbed in the people whom He addressed, and how He subordinated everything to their interests. It remains for us to look in some detail at the way in which He adapted His teaching to the men and women who heard Him, and more especially to the circle of disciples whom He gathered round Him.

2. Outline of this Division.—Taking first a broad survey of the course of the teaching from the sunny Galilean days to the dark night in which He was betrayed, so as to gain a clear insight into the action and reaction of Teacher and environment, we will then consider His distinctive method of dealing (1) with the multitude, and (2) with the individual, whether sympathetic or hostile, both within or without the kingdom.

3. The Teaching a Growth both in Substance and Form.—The casual reader of the Gospels is apt to imagine that the account there given of the teaching of Christ is a miscellaneous record, having no organic sequence, and suggesting no development in its subject-matter or change in its method of

presentation. A more careful study reveals, on the other hand, a marked growth or unfolding in the substance of the teaching and a distinctiveness of manner in its output, according to the audience addressed and the particular object He had in view at the time. The method of Jesus in teaching the multitudes that thronged to hear Him on special occasions was different from that which He followed in private with His disciples. He adapted the form to the hearers and the occasion.

4. Clearly Marked Stages. — There were also more or less clearly marked stages in the development of the Message, and it is easy to note certain peculiarities belonging to each of these stages or periods. In this chapter we will glance at some of these.

5. First Stage.—In the first of these periods we find Jesus preparing the foundation for the superstructure of His after-teaching. It dates from the return from the temptation in the wilderness to the definite call and appointment of the twelve disciples and of the seventy. This may be called the *præparatio Evangelica*, the period of preparation for the more distinctive teaching that followed. It followed in a sense immediately on the ministry of John the Baptist, but was in part contemporaneous with it. Our Lord's special aim was to create rather than to satisfy expectancy, to rouse the sympathy of individuals rather than the interest of the crowd, to explore the ground rather than to sow the seed. For an account of this preliminary period we are indebted to the fourth evangelist, who (in John i. 6—iv. 54) provides us with details that fit in exactly between Mark i. 13 and 14, and enables us to fill in an otherwise unrecognised gap in the narrative. The evangelist speaks in the manner (1) of an eye-witness who vividly recalls the incidents which he recounts, and the personalities, who move clearly across the field of memory, and (2) of one who was

himself a disciple and who always takes the standpoint of a disciple. The narrative deals with the way in which Jesus affected a little company of men and women, and roused in them the germs of that love and trust which afterwards developed into full apostleship, with light touches of a shadowy background of unbelief and rejection on the part of others which, later on, darkened into bitter hatred and persecution (John ii. 24, 25; *cf.* ii. 19, 20). In this narrative also we find included two incidents typically suggestive of the impression made by Jesus (1) on a cultured Jew, too tightly bound in the traditions and difficulties of intellectualism to break away into discipleship (*ib.* iii. 1-11), and (2) on a woman of low intelligence and character, who was yet full of responsiveness to His sympathetic influence—the first-fruits of that great multitude of sinful men and women who had been given up by society, and relegated to the class of aliens and outcasts, but who in the Master's hand have become saints and martyrs (*ib.* iv. 1-42).

6. Characteristics of this Period.—During this period Jesus travels about quietly and unobtrusively with an avoidance as far as possible of all public notice. It was also clearly a part of Jesus' aim to avoid anything in the form of competition with the mission of John the Baptist. He remained in the neighbourhood (at Bethabara) where His forerunner taught for some little time after the temptation, and there He gathered round Him the five apostles mentioned in John i. 29-51; but when He found that His presence seemed to disconcert John's followers and create an impression that He Himself was a rival to the fiery prophet of the wilderness, He summarily left (*ib.* iv. 1-3) in company with a few of these disciples and travelled northwards through Samaria to Galilee. All this time He seemed to have been quietly engaged in "taking a survey of the different religious sections in Judæa

and examining their fitness to furnish helpers for His work ".[1] In this He does not seem to have been encouraged by the results of His observation. The Pharisees as a class He recognised as being hopeless (John ii. 23-24); the cultured section, represented by Nicodemus, was lacking in practical force and wholeheartedness, while John's disciples were on the whole as yet dominated too much by the personality of their leader. The result of His brief mission in Samaria fills Him with a glad vision of the splendid harvest of souls awaiting Him in the wider world, and makes His soul overflow with joy (*ib.* iv. 31-38). But for the present He contents Himself with the following He has already gained, and continues His journey northward, where in the freer and simpler community of Galilee He finds the seed-plot of His kingdom, and draws to Him one by one the elect souls who were afterwards to be the witnesses and apostles of His truth.

7. Second Stage—The Public Ministry.—After a few months of busy movement to and fro, and of gradually increasing public activity (Luke iv. 14, 15; *cf.* John iv. 45), the time arrived for a more public assumption of His great office as Teacher. The Master had now "come to His own". The result of the first stage in His career was to gather round Him a group of attached disciples, and to awaken widespread public interest and admiration. He recognised in Galilee the appropriate cradle of the movement He was about to initiate, where He found a position of independence, and met with a spirit of sympathy in a region which was sufficiently removed from the "pedantry of Rabbinical schools," and the interference of meddlesome rivals (Mark ii. 22).

The immediate occasion chosen by our Lord for the definite assumption of His mission was the imprisonment of John the Baptist: "Now after that

[1] Latham, *Pastor Pastorum*, p. 172.

John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 14, 15).

8. First "Note" of Public Ministry.—Here the distinctive evangelic note of the public ministry is struck, and round this text the teaching henceforth circles harmoniously as its centre. This period lasted for about a year and nine months, from the Pentecost of (June) 27 A.D., according to most authorities, to the Passover of (April) 29 A.D.

9. The Period of Vitality and Power.—It is characterised generally by a glorious and superabundant outpouring of energy, in word and deed, on the part of the great Teacher. He crowded into those brief months a spiritual activity whose wealth and range can only be dimly measured by its immediate impression at the time, and whose inspiration for after ages is still an unspent fountain. Such an output could only be accomplished by one whose physical forces were at their best, whose mental gifts were in the fullest flow and under the completest control, and whose soul was aflame with the sense of a unique opportunity and a Divine mission. There is an air of youthful hope and brightness about the bearing of Jesus during this period. His coming was always the sign for an immediate and happy stir among the populace (Mark ix. 15, 25, etc.); crowds followed Him wherever He went (*ib* i. 33; v. 24), and hung entranced on His gracious words and deeds (Matt. vii. 28; Mark vii. 37); wonder, curiosity, devout praise to God, adoration and worship awaited Him everywhere. It was the year of sunny favour and fruitful effort, and of many miracles (especially of healing, Matt. iv. 23; Luke ix. 6). Jesus during this period was a great traveller (*cf.* Acts x. 38); this was mainly in Galilee, with occasional visits to Jerusalem during the great feasts,

and one excursion across the northern borders into the regions of Tyre and Sidon (Mark vii. 24). He never stayed long in one place, but went to and fro in the cities and villages of the land, teaching in the synagogues, or in the streets, or by the seashore, or in quiet places far from the stir and bustle of town life. During a career of such incessant activity He was naturally pressed very hardly at times, and it was difficult for Him to find adequate time for food or rest; but He made it convenient occasionally to steal away from the crowd with His disciples, and at other times slipped away even from them, that He might refresh His soul in the silence and solitude of the mountains, and cultivate the friendship of His Divine Father by prayer and meditation. From these quiet hours He always returned with renewed energy and ardour to His work.

Looking more particularly at the methods of the public ministry, we note these important features:—

(1) *The Many and the Few.*—Two definite purposes seem to be followed by Jesus which at first seem somewhat parallel, but presently tend to diverge. The first is the general teaching of the multitude; the second is the special training of the disciples for their proper work. It is not always easy to distinguish those portions of our Lord's words which are addressed to the public, from those spoken to the disciples in private; but there are certain marks which frequently enable us to differentiate them. The popular discourses are characterised by breadth of effect;[1] they are full of striking imagery and memorable, proverbial sayings;[2] they are illustrated from the past events or current facts of daily life, and are increasingly parabolic in form.[3] The teaching addressed to the disciples, on the other hand, is more detailed;[4] great pains is taken not

[1] Matt. iv. 23; xi. 7, etc.
[2] *Ib.* ix. 12, 13, 14-17; xi. 7-24; xii. 7.
[3] *Ib.* xii. *passim*, xiii. *passim*, etc.
[4] *Ib.* x. 5 ff.

only to make it memorable in form, but also to give them a clear insight into its meaning; and while there is the same homeliness in the illustrations, there is a more evident desire to secure a spiritual understanding of their significance (Matt. xv. 16). Jesus does not seem to have been greatly disturbed by the inability of the nation at large to enter into the deeper meaning of His mission; but He was always deeply pained by any sign of spiritual obtuseness in His chosen disciples (*ib.* xvi. 8; *cf.* John xiv. 9), and He rejoiced with great exultation when they gave evidence of sudden or of increasing insight into His truth and mission (Matt. xvi. 17), and of success in the proclamation of their message (Luke x. 17-20). For He knew that the final establishment of His kingdom depended on the efficiency of these instruments of His choice, and to their training and equipment He devoted Himself with an ardour, a patience, and a love that knew no limit or pause.

10. The Gathering Cloud.—(2) Another feature of this period was the gradual emergence of opposition on the part of the authorities, and of fickleness in the interest of the public at large. At first the ruling parties simply held aloof (Luke v. 17); a little while later they began to take up an attitude of watchful and unsympathetic criticism (Matt. ix. 11; Mark iii. 2); still later, an active effort was made to discredit Him publicly by propounding certain seemingly unanswerable religious problems and conundrums (Mark xii. 18-27, 28-34; Matt. xxii. 15-22; *cf.* Matt. xvii. 24); and, when all these methods resulted in invariable failure and discredit to themselves (Mark xii. 34), they joined their forces and took counsel together to murder Him privily (John v. 18; xi. 53). These attempts at discomfiture and assassination never found our Lord unready, and till the hour when He voluntarily gave Himself up to the authorities (*ib.* x. 18) He did not fail to turn the machinations of His enemies back upon them-

selves with a masterly handling of each situation as it arose, which left them silent, baffled and impotent (Matt. xxii. 22; Mark xi. 18).

11. The Veiled Discourse.—(3) We can note a subtle change in our Lord's method of teaching and preaching in harmony with this development in the relation between Him and the people among whom He moved. At first He poured forth the treasures of His truth in bright, antithetic memorable sentences—such sayings as were comprehensible to all who listened to Him with intelligent sympathy, and were easily remembered and passed on from one to another. To this period belongs a considerable part of the collection of sayings embodied in the *Logia* of Matthew, notably those in the so-called "Sermon on the Mount". How far this may be looked upon as a single discourse it is not easy to tell; probably it is a condensed summary of teaching that extended over the whole of the first year's ministry in Galilee. Possibly towards the close of that period Jesus held a kind of *al fresco* "Summer School," during which He gathered together into a condensed discourse the salient points of teaching hitherto given fragmentarily as occasion arose, thus giving His friends a more or less complete outline of His doctrine concerning the "Blessed Life". Be this as it may, the chief feature in the form of our Lord's teaching during this early period is its expository character and the terseness and vividness of its phraseology. Each thought sparkles like a gem, with a bright, sunny lustre of its own.

12. The Controversial "Note".—But, as the latent forces of opposition took clearer shape, we mark a new note striking like a discord through the lovely music. Our Lord's teaching gradually, by the constraining force of circumstance, assumes a controversial form. Many of His most characteristic utterances were called forth by the attitude of growing criticism and hostility which met Him from the

side of the dominant parties in Church and State. To this hostility we owe, among many others, the Lord's sayings concerning the Sabbath Day (Mark ii. 27, 28; Luke vi. 1-11; xiii. 11-17, etc.). The fickleness and faithlessness of the crowd also called forth His indignant notice (Luke vii. 31-35; Matt. xi. 20-30). From this time onward almost all His teaching takes a more or less veiled or parabolic form. He instructs His friends and also confutes His enemies by means of these beautiful, puzzling, suggestive, fascinating stories (Matt. xiii. 1-53; Luke vii. 36-50; xii. 1-12, etc.); and frequently the double thread of instruction and warning is seen running through the same discourses (see Matt. xiii. 13-16).

13. Third Stage. The Final Crisis. A Double Change.—As the pressure of opposition increased, and the shadow of the approaching end fell deepening across His path, our Lord's teaching becomes still more clearly differentiated in its tone and method. Towards His disciples His manner becomes increasingly solicitous and affectionate; and while the note of warning strikes frequently through His conversations even with them, they are marked by a characteristic tenderness and yearning. He tells them plainly of the tragedy that awaits Him during His final visit to Jerusalem (Mark x. 33); establishes their faith in the gracious Providence and protection of their Heavenly Father (Luke xi. 5-13); and speaks by parable as well as directly of His Second Coming (Matt. xvi. 28; xxiv. 3-51; Mark xiii. 9-11, etc.), in a manner calculated to rouse their hopes, deepen their sense of responsibility, and fill them with strength and comfort for the days of sorrow and tribulation before them. To His enemies, on the other hand, He assumes an attitude of steady judicial indignation; the terrible words, "Woe unto you," replace the "Blessed" of the Beatitudes; and His disappointment at their refusal of His Gospel expresses itself in passages filled with the

thunders and lightnings of a Divine and resistless wrath (Matt. xxi. 40; xxii. 1-14; xxiii. 13-39). Finally, our Lord turns away from those who had rejected His teaching and denied His Messiahship, concentrates His whole attention and thought on His beloved "inner circle," spending the last few days of His life in tenderest communion and confidential talk with them, as well as in personal preparation for the closing trial of His own life. Some of His sayings to them are given in fragmentary form in the three first evangelists (*ib.* xxvi. 21-25, 26-29, 31-33, and parallel passages; Luke xxii. 31-38; Matt. xxvi. 36-46, etc.). In John we have several chapters of detailed discourse, which are supplementary to the other accounts; in these the great Teacher opens His heart and pours forth His innermost thoughts and feelings in the Upper Room. With these, and including the object-lesson of humility, given in the thirteenth chapter of John, the teaching work of our Lord came to an end; though after His resurrection some supplementary lessons were given (Luke xxiv. 13-35, 37-48; Mark xvi. 14-18; John xx. 20-31; xxi. 1-24; Matt. xxviii. 16-20; Acts i. 3-12) ere He finally vanished out of their sight and was received up into glory.

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSION TO THE CLASSES.

1. The Two-fold Message of Jesus.—The Master's method in practice was—as we have seen—a happy combination of appeals to the masses and to individuals. There are great teachers who are at their best only when in the presence of multitudes; their resources are never fully called forth except under the inspiration of numbers. Others do not feel at home except when they have a few individuals (or even one) to deal with at a time. Jesus was equally at home with the many, the few or the one. We have abundant testimony in the Gospels that He varied His method of instruction according to the character and the size of His audience; and He showed an equal mastery over it whether it was large or small, friendly or unsympathetic.

2. The Preacher and the Teacher.—His public work divides itself broadly into two channels—*preaching* and *teaching*. "By preaching as distinct from teaching may be understood the proclamation [Greek *Kērugma, cf. Kērux* a herald] of the elementary truths concerning the Kingdom of God as a kingdom of grace; the paternal love of God, the hope that is in His mercy for the most sinful, the worth of man to God at his very worst, the duty of repentance, and the possibilities of sanctity for the penitent. By teaching, on the other hand, is denoted instruction in the theory so to speak of the kingdom; its absolute worth, its imperial claims, its

moral ideal in itself and in contrast to current conceptions".[1] From these definitions it is clear that preaching is preliminary to teaching; that it deals primarily with the revelation and announcement of Divine truth and love; that its appeal is mainly to the affections and the will. Teaching comes afterwards; its function is mainly explanatory and elaborative; it appeals to the intellect and the conscience in the practical application of the foundation truths on which all religious appeal rests. Preaching lays emphasis on Divine grace—what God has done, and is willing to do, for the soul; teaching, on human duty—the response that God looks for from man. Thus we would naturally expect that in preaching Jesus would make His appeal to the multitude, and in teaching to His disciples; and we find that this is so in the pages of the Gospels. In the beginning of His ministry Jesus for the most part preached; later on He gave more attention to teaching. At no period, however, did He restrict Himself to either function; there were always—even to the end — individual souls to be appealed to; and there were always—even in the earliest times —devout and spiritual folk who were fit for instruction in the mysteries of the kingdom. So Jesus went forth *preaching* and *teaching* as occasion offered itself to His eager and loving spirit.

3. The Preacher's Plan of Campaign. — We find that Jesus as a Preacher followed a certain plan, and that He varied His method according to the character of His congregation. This is seen in the fact that He conducted three more or less distinct missions to the various classes of the population. We may denominate these briefly as (1) the mission to the synagogue-worshippers, (2) the mission to the multitude at large, (3) and the mission to the outcast.

[1] A. B. Bruce's *With Open Face*, p. 86.

4. The Synagogue Mission.—Jesus began His ministry with an appeal, more or less organised and continuous, to the religious public. During the early months of His public life we are told that "He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils" (Mark i. 39). That this was according to a deliberate plan is shown in the previous verse where He gives as His reason for leaving Capernaum: "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; *for therefore came I forth*," *i.e.*, as a preacher of the Gospel. And it was a large and comprehensive plan; even though it would not be wise to take "throughout all Galilee" literally, it must mean a carefully organised itinerary which took some time to complete, possibly several months. Jesus probably gave more attention to the smaller towns and villages than to the great centres of population; it would have been impossible to visit all the 204 towns of which Josephus says (with undoubted exaggeration) that the smallest had 15,000 inhabitants; and the phrase *next towns* in the above passage should be translated *village*-towns. There are many indications that Jesus had a strong preference for these village communities, for reasons already mentioned; in the large towns also the hierarchy would be more powerful, the leaders among whom were from the first watchful and suspicious of His work. Therefore He would naturally concentrate His efforts on the village-synagogues of His native land, and on Sundays and at the two week-evening services usually held, He would speak to the people of the *Gospel of the Kingdom*.

5. Effects of the Synagogue Mission.—The character of the preaching He gave them may be inferred from its effects. Mark tells us that it was marked by *novelty* ("What is this? A new teaching!" Mark i. 27); by *authority*, which included a marvellous effect on the "possessed" as

well as the sane ("with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him," *ib.*); and by a wonderful and immediate *popularity* ("and the report of Him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about," ver. 28). Luke adds a characteristic touch to this, in describing the first impression made by His sermon in Nazareth ("And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the *words of grace* which proceeded out of His mouth," Luke iv. 22). *Freshness*, *power* and *grace*—these are three grand notes of effective preaching, and they applied to the utterances of Jesus as to no other who has ever stood forth to proclaim the Gospel.

6. The Subject-matter of the Preaching.—As to the contents of this synagogue preaching, we can infer from the scattered hints that have come to us, that it was concerned mainly with the announcement of the coming Kingdom of God (Mark iv. 23). The love of the Father to men; emancipation from the bonds of sin, of oppression, of mechanical ceremonies; the awakening of a new spirit, in place of formal performance of legal rites; freedom born of Divine forgiveness and Sonship; the promise of a new power making for forgiveness and inward peace, which would be within reach of all men of simple, teachable, pure hearts—these doubtless would be the topics that formed the staple of Christ's early preaching. Interwoven with the spiritual enlightenment which He constantly bestowed, we find that He carried on a healing ministry on an extensive scale (*ib.* i. 32-34), showing that, except in a few places (including His native village), that spiritual *rapport* between Him and the people, without which He could do no mighty work, had been fully established (Matt. xiii. 58).

7. The Open-air Mission.—This brings us in view of the mission with which Jesus followed up His synagogue ministry (it was probably partly con-

temporaneous with it), and which was conducted in the open air. It was only for a while that free access was granted to Him in the synagogues proper. The religious authorities were speedily alarmed at the tone and temper of His preaching, and as time went on they would doubtless put increasing difficulties in the way of lending the accredited places of worship for the proclamation of His novel and unheard-of teaching. This did not leave Him without resources. The authorities might proscribe the synagogues, but they could not proscribe the public roadway, the sea-shore, and the mountain-side. And so we find that He first alternated open-air preaching with addresses in the synagogues, afterwards almost entirely giving up the latter method for the other.

8. How the Conditions Favoured Open-air Preaching.—The social habits of the East made this open-air method peculiarly easy and successful. Under those sunny, rainless skies, much of the life of the people was spent out of doors. A crowd was easily gathered, and, as we have seen, there seems to have been no suspicion or jealousy on the part of the civil authorities to cope with, which might have made such meetings dangerous. The freedom of these gatherings from the conventional restraints of synagogue worship also suited our Lord's lucid and untrammelled mind. He could say what He pleased, engage in question and answer, move from place to place without hindrance, and bring His speech to a close in His own way and at His own time. Most of His set discourses, and many of His brightest and most picturesque utterances bear the marks of having been spoken on these occasions. There is an open-air freshness about them ; the peace of meadows, the amplitude of the high hills breathes through them ; they are racy of the soil and of the breeze. His alert fancy would fasten on the scenes and incidents around Him, and He would find some of His hap-

piest similes in the familiar objects that met the eye of preacher and listeners. It was in this way, we may be sure, that many of His parables would take shape. The sower and the seed; the field in which tares had been sown; the drag-net; the lost sheep; the vineyard and its labourers; the barren fig-tree; the tree putting forth its leaves; the blind leading the blind; the children playing in the market-place —all these deal with such concrete realities as would be constantly met with in His journeyings to and fro; and they would serve to drive home the truths of His Gospel through the eye as well as the ear. Our Lord's style in these open-air addresses was more popular and homely than on formal occasions; refinements of thought and expression would be out of place; He appealed to the elemental religious instincts. There was always something in His words to arrest the attention and touch the universal heart.

9. Net Results. (1) *Favourable.*—The result of the synagogue and of the open-air mission was two-fold. First, it created a deep and widespread public impression as something unprecedented and unique. "We have never seen it after this fashion" was the universal verdict. Curiosity, wonder, a sense of opening mysteries, of unthought-of but self-evident revelations, swept over the community. Jesus was the popular hero of the hour. The crowds that followed Him everywhere (Matt. iv. 25), while mainly drawn from Galilee, came also from distant parts, all eager to hear this new and wonderful Preacher (Mark iii. 7, 8). In a short time the pressure of the multitude became an annoyance and a danger; the popular excitement interfered with Him in His work; and at times it was necessary to have a boat in readiness, that He might be able to retire seawards when the crush became unbearable (*ib.* iii. 9). A tide of intense expectancy rose throughout the land; the air was electric with an excitement

that even threatened at one moment to become a political danger, and caused Jesus to escape hurriedly into a desert place (John vi. 15).

(2) *Negative.*—But, secondly, we can see a growing disappointment taking possession of the Master's heart at the shallow and empty character of this popular *furore* of which He found Himself the centre. Popular enthusiasm seldom takes high and ennobling forms; usually it spends itself in trivial and evanescent gushes of sentiment. Jesus early perceived that His popularity was not based on any adequate realisation of His purpose and mission. The majority came to gaze with open-mouthed wonder at His works of healing, or to seek for such physical and temporal benefits as they thought He could give them. He sternly repressed these shallow and interested motives (John vi. 26), and discouraged those who followed Him not because of the Divine teaching He gave them, but because of the "loaves and fishes". This disappointment took shape in the parable of the Sower, which marks an epoch in His career, when He ceased to cultivate the friendship of the crowd and turned with great yearning and solicitude towards the few teachable followers who were gradually being sifted from the crowd, and who attached themselves more and more openly to His person. The net result of the two early missions of Jesus was to convince Him of the impossibility of indoctrinating the common multitude with the treasure of His teaching, and to cause Him to concentrate His chief attention on chosen individuals who showed themselves more or less capable of receiving and appreciating the true Gospel of the Kingdom.

10. But there is another important mission which Jesus undertook. It was the **Mission to the Outcast,** the socially ostracised. Two such classes specially attracted His attention and love. One was the publicans or tax-gatherers, who farmed

the imperial taxes, and were consequently hated and despised by the whole community. These were by no means necessarily foreigners; Matthew and Zaccheus, the two publicans who figure in the narrative, were both Jews, as their names indicate, and there were doubtless many others. Now it was one of the canons of Jewish society that if any one undertook this office, he was to be driven out of religious society; no money known to have come from such a man was received into the alms box or the *corban* of the temple. There was nothing, however, in the occupation which necessarily degraded or unspiritualised those who followed it; doubtless it afforded almost unexampled opportunities of peculation and oppression; but a man of honour and patriotic feeling might follow the calling in a blameless manner (*cf.* Luke xix. 8). The other class of social and religious pariahs which drew the heart of the Good Master was that of the fallen women of the cities, who followed a nameless calling. They were tersely classed as "sinners"; such indeed they were. But many of them were even "more sinned against than sinning"; innocent victims of lust and ignorance at the beginning, who had been driven by the ostracism of society into ever deeper degradation, being left at last without any hope whatever of rescue and rehabilitation. Among these there were not a few who were religiously accessible; and Jesus recognising that, determined to expend His richest energies and love in their redemption.

11. Christ's Bold Policy.—In order to do this He took two bold and decided steps; first, He called a publican to be one of His chosen bodyguard of disciples; and, secondly, He accepted his invitation to meet others of that profession at a great public feast (Luke v. 29), at which "many" were present. This feast was probably suggested by Jesus Himself as a means whereby He might come into close contact with a class that could not be

reached through the synagogue; though doubtless many would be found in the open-air crowds He had been addressing of late. At this feast there were also "others," and who these were may be inferred from the next verse. This act of Jesus greatly scandalised the respectable people, who felt that the foundations of social propriety had been shaken; and they sneered openly at His action (ver. 30). But He was ready with His answer. Not because He was one of them, but because He wished to make them one with Him, did He consort with these rejected publicans and sinners; and because He recognised that, hidden away beneath all the rapacity and coarseness of the life of many of them, they were souls open to the appeal of His Gospel (*cf.* Matt. xxi. 31). And so He threw back on the cavillers the burden of disgrace which they had endeavoured to heap upon Him. "They that are whole have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,"—an evangelic message through which we can see a flash of irony glowing with a heat and edge that shamed them into silence.

12. The Parables of Grace.—But He was not satisfied with a general statement on a matter so momentous, and so we find Him turning from His critics to His newly found audience of reprobates, and pouring into their ears as delightful a course of teaching as any within the pages of the Gospels. The parables of grace that make the fifteenth of Luke so sweet and fragrant were clearly addressed to this company. The story of the lost sheep, of the woman looking for her lost piece of silver (symbol of her pure marriage vows), of the prodigal son, exactly fitted the situation. Nor did Jesus limit Himself to speech in this mission to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He went out of His way to bestow forgiveness and benediction on typical individuals belonging to these two classes. The stories of the

woman "who was a sinner," and of Zaccheus the publican, were object-lessons both of the Divine love in the uttermost reach of its saving power, and of the capacity of these rejected people to rise to the highest and truest acceptance of the Gospel of grace. In deed and in word the great Teacher thus vindicated His mission to the rejected, and justified all the machineries of rescue which have since been an integral part of the saving work of the Christian Church in all ages and lands.

13. The Good Physician.—Our Lord's answer to these objectors also shows how it was that He had such power over men and women who had fallen so low. A true spiritual teacher holds very much the same relation to his pupils as a physician to his patients. He has to deal with men conscious not only of imperfection, but of frailty and sin. He must, therefore, be deeply versed in the pathology of the soul, and have that insight and sympathy into its ailments which enables him to touch the tender spot, and bring the medicine to the heart of the disease. This was one of the characteristic qualities of Jesus in His dealings with those who were conscious of this condition. He filled them with confidence that He understood them, and loved them, and hoped for them. He was specially drawn for this reason towards the "moral incurables" of humanity, and they were as instinctively drawn towards Him. His love, His hopefulness, His appeal touched them in an unfamiliar but sensitive place, and the dormant manhood and womanhood awoke at His touch.

14. The Public Controversies of Jesus.—A sketch of the ministry of our Lord would be very imperfect without some reference to the public controversies in which He took part. This method of teaching was not of His own choice; it was forced upon Him at first by the silent attitude of the ruling classes, and later, by their open endeavours to

entangle Him in public discourse. It is to a casual glance somewhat strange to find Him engaged in these word-combats with His enemies. His whole nature would shrink instinctively from such encounters; the happy truths of the kingdom did not lend themselves readily to controversial methods of exposition. And yet we never find any indication that Jesus failed to meet a challenge once it was thrown down. He accepted the conditions laid upon Him; there are even indications that He entered with a kind of holy zest into the conflicts that were forced upon Him. This could only be because He recognised that these controversies afforded Him a valuable opportunity. This opportunity was twofold. It enabled Him to discredit the false teachers who claimed to come to the people with the authority of Moses and the prophets, but who were unable to hold their own in a battle of wits and words, nor even to substantiate their claims in fair argument. And it gave Him many priceless chances of driving home a practical spiritual lesson into the minds of the bystanders, who would listen to this conflict of experts with zest, and would not be likely to forget the details of what was said on either side.

15. Christ's Methods in Controversy.—These controversies, sprung upon Him unawares and without warning—now in the synagogue, now at a feast, now by the wayside as He talked to the multitude, now in the temple courts where the learned held their solemn discussions—never found Him unprepared, nor at a loss what to say in self-defence, or in rètort. His method of dealing with cavillers and objectors was exactly suited to the situation. Professor Blaikie summarises His various ways, meeting them in this way:—

(1) He appeals to a *common authority*—the Scriptures—in which all of them had implicit confidence as the final court of appeal (Matt. xxii. 29; Mark ii. 25, 26).

(2) Or to an *admitted principle*, sometimes in the form of a proverb (Matt. xii. 27; Luke v. 31), or some common custom (Matt. ix. 16).

(3) He uses the *argumentum ad hominem* with telling force (Luke xiii. 15, etc.).

(4) He puts a case which embodies a principle of unquestionable cogency, and then bids His hearers make the application for themselves, as in the case of the parable of the Two Debtors, and of the Good Samaritan, etc. (Luke vii. 41 ff.; x. 25 ff.).

(5) Occasionally, He resorts to a dramatic object-lesson in settlement of a dispute, as when He puts a child in the midst of His quarrelling disciples, or asks for a piece of money by which He turns the tables on the Herodians (Matt. xxii. 16-21).

16. What Controversy did for the Cause.—The result of these controversial encounters was two-fold. It shook public confidence in the scribes and Pharisees, while enhancing His own authority with the people and with His own disciples. And secondly, it drew forth from Jesus some of His brightest and most characteristic utterances. It is not till we examine carefully into the question that we realise how true is this last remark. The record of the controversial sayings of Christ occupy an astonishingly large place in the Gospels; if they were expunged, much of its priceless teachings would be lost, as these are imbedded in the polemic discourses like gold-nuggets in rough rocks. And through all these wordy battles we hear still the same voice of pity, of love, and of invitation that speaks in all the discourses and conversations of the great Master.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSION TO INDIVIDUALS.

I.

1. Christ's Supreme Interest.—The charge brought against many teachers and preachers, that they are more interested in their subject than in their hearers, could not, as we have already seen, be brought against Jesus. His interest in truth was subordinate to His interest in men. His real thought was for souls, not doctrines, and in His teaching He only aimed at making His doctrine clear and impressive in order that it might be absorbed into the lives of His pupils. Every duty with Him was rooted in a truth; every truth blossomed into a duty. His teaching was ultimately directed to the conversion and perfecting of individual souls.

In His attitude towards individual men and women we note three remarkable features. He knew men; He loved men; and He had a great power of influencing men. Insight, sympathy, power,—these qualities were manifested in all His dealings with those who came into contact with Him in His ministry.

2. His Knowledge of Human Nature.—How far this was supernatural in its character, and how far the result of keen observation of men's actual condition, is a question too intricate to be dealt with here. After all allowances are made, there is a residuum which seems to imply more than the knowledge an unaided man could obtain. Both in His

relation to the Father and to His human brethren there was something that defies analysis and description. This is suggested in the words of the fourth evangelist, "He knew all men, and . . . needed not that any should bear witness concerning a man; for He Himself knew what was in the man" (John ii. 24, 25, R.V., margin); and it is shown in detail in His first interviews with Peter (*ib.* i. 42), and with Nathanael (*ib.* i. 48); in His statement to the woman of Samaria (*ib.* iv. 17, 18); in His prophecies concerning Peter's denial (Matt. xxvi. 34) and martyrdom (John xxi. 18), and in other instances.

Be this as it may, Jesus always impressed those around Him with a marvellous and unfailing insight into their character and disposition, and even into their passing words and thoughts. He used this knowledge sometimes in self-defence (John ii. 24), sometimes in order to administer a severe reproof to unsympathetic bystanders (Luke vi. 2 ff.), or to give encouragement to diffident beginners in a better life (*ib.* v. 8), or a salutary warning to His disciples in a moment of perplexity (Matt. xvi. 6), or of over-confidence (Mark xiv. 38). He used the same unfailing insight into the possibilities of character when He chose His disciples, and gave them a place in the inner circle of His confidence; and all through His relation with them we find Him giving them words of advice, encouragement, rebuke, or incentive, as He saw they had need. Candidates for a place in His service He treated with the same entire mastery of their spiritual condition and capacities (see Luke ix. 57-62); and when men came to Him with a sense of vague unrest and dissatisfaction, He told them what ailed them and what to do in order to get rid of their spiritual malady (Mark x. 21).

3. What He Thought of Man.—In view of this perfect insight into the hearts of men it is of the utmost importance to know what our Lord thought of the spiritual condition of the race as a whole.

And here we find that with a clear sense of the infinite differences that separated the extremes in each, He divided men into two classes, and only two. They were those who were within, and those who were without, the kingdom. This is shown most clearly in the Gospel of Matthew, the writer of which is fond of dwelling on the contrasts and antitheses of Christ's teaching. There we have these two classes indicated by the *two gates*, the *two ways*, the *two endings* (Matt. vii. 13, 14). It also runs through many of the parables, notably those of the Wise and Foolish Builders (*ib.* vii. 24-27), of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (*ib.* xxv. 1-13), of the Talents and the Pounds (*ib.* xxv. 14-30; Luke xix. 12-27). In the parabolic Vision of Judgment this is the one great lesson to be remembered (Matt. xxv. 31-46). Men are ultimately either good or bad; there is no middle course. In the one class there are some who are finally and hopelessly wicked—they have committed the "unpardonable sin" (*ib.* xii. 32); others are "not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34); in the other there are men who have scarcely got across the border-line, being "babes" in the kingdom; others are qualifying for the highest place in it (Matt. xx. 23). This ruling conception governs all our Lord's thoughts in His work of redemption, and is the keynote to all His saving activity. Nowadays there is a general tendency to ignore or to whittle down the meaning of this great fact; but it undoubtedly lies at the foundation of the teaching of Christ, and as such must be rescued from oblivion and neglect, and set in the forefront of all Christian evangelism and work.

4. Grace, Not Merit, the Watchword of the Kingdom.—But we must here be careful to note that Jesus absolutely repudiated the current notion of His day that any man was a member of the Divine kingdom in virtue of his own merits or

doings. The highest good, of which He was the revealer and prophet, was not a matter of human attainment, but of Divine love. Salvation was the free gift of God. It was of grace, *i.e.*, it was *gratis*. Here it was that He differed most fundamentally from the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, who held that eternal blessedness was to be gained by the fulfilment of "righteousness" in the restricted sense, *i.e.*, by perfect obedience to the outward law. The qualifying principle for entrance into the kingdom was *faith*, by which He meant simply openness of mind and heart to the freely offered truth and love of God. His dearest desire was to awaken and reward this receptive mood in His hearers (Matt. xvii. 20; xxi. 21; Mark iv. 20; xi. 22; John xiv. 1); His greatest joy was to find it exhibited in a large and generous way (Matt. viii. 10; Luke vii. 9). Faith was the great condition of human salvation, because it made a man accessible to God's influence and grace; and He taught that our power of receiving this spiritual benefit was in direct proportion to our capacity for faith (Matt. ix. 29). This was the *sine qua non;* and, therefore, He was grieved at its absence, and delighted at its presence in the individual or the community. We may say that it was the touchstone by which He tried all who came in contact with Him; and that His first task with all was to awaken in them this crucial quality of faith.

5. Christ's Love for Men.—In spite of Christ's intimate and unfailing insight into the frail and sinful condition of our nature, He always showed a deep and inextinguishable love for men. This was the determinative motive of His Incarnation (John iii. 16) and of His teaching. He was a Lover of souls; and in the face of human depravity, ingratitude and opposition, He maintained this love to the end, not only for His "own" (*ib.* xiii. 1), but even for those who had persecuted, rejected and

crucified Him (Luke xxiii. 34). Deeply disappointed as He was with His rejection by those whom He had come to succour and save, and wrathfully as He denounced their hypocrisy and hard-heartedness, this did not sour or embitter His heart. His grief as He wept over Jerusalem was awakened not by the effect of their treatment of Himself, but by the terrible consequences which it must involve for them (Matt. xxiii. 26-28); and He rejected the sympathy of the pitiful women who followed Him along the *Via Dolorosa*, only because there was worse in store for them and for their children than for Himself (Luke xxiii. 28).

6. The Individuality of this Love.—Christ's love for the race was no vague and indeterminate emotion, but took definite form in His love for individual men. His affection was more deeply concentrated on some than on others, without in any way lessening the force of His regard for all. We see this in His love for His disciples as a whole (John xiii. 1); for the three who followed Him so much more closely than did the others (Matt. xvii. 1, etc.); for John, the dearest of them all (John xiii. 23, etc.); and for the family at Bethany (*ib.* xi. 5, *cf.* ver. 36). Jesus showed a special regard for certain strangers with whom He came into momentary contact, *e.g.*, the scribe who was not far from the Kingdom of God (Mark xii. 34), and the young man seeking the secret of eternal life, of whom we are told that Jesus, gazing on him, "loved him" (*ib.* x. 21). The freedom with which Jesus allowed His personal preferences to show themselves, without in any way impairing the ampler outgoings of His love to the race, or interfering with the entire justice of His treatment of all, is one of the indications of the perfect health and balance of His character.

7. Christ's Power over Men.—This mingled insight and love that marked our Lord's attitude

towards the race generally, and towards individuals in particular, give us the secret of His success in dealing with the souls who came in contact with Him. He knew them, He loved them, and because of this He awakened their trust in Him. Men ever turn to a superior nature who shows respect and appreciation for their idiosyncrasies. They love to be dealt with as individuals, and not merely as heads in a crowd. This Jesus did with unfailing tact and perfect sympathy. Jesus saw a Divine and recoverable element in every man; and He fastened on this as on a precious thing—thus giving men a deep sense of His pity and helpfulness. The very purity and holiness of His own character gave Him peculiar power to deal successfully with such cases. "The principal grievance which I have against doctors," wrote Amiel (*Journal*, pp. 207, 208), "is that they neglect the real problem, which is to seize the unity of the individual who claims their care. Their methods of investigation are far too elementary; a doctor who does not read you to the bottom is ignorant of essentials. To me the ideal doctor would be a man endowed with profound knowledge of life and of the soul, intuitively divining any suffering or disorder of whatever kind, and restoring peace by his mere presence. Such a doctor is possible, but the greater number of them lack the higher and inner life; they know nothing of the transcendent laboratories of nature, they seem superficial, profane strangers to divine things, destitute of intuition and sympathy. The model doctor should be at once a genius, a saint, a man of God." These words are an unconscious portrait of Jesus in His dealings with men's souls and bodies; and they tell us how it was that men came from all parts to Him with their spiritual as well as physical ailments, and opened their hearts to His teaching and influence as though He were God Himself. They were glad to unburden their souls before Him, eager

to hear what He had to say to them, and many were willing to accept His word as final and determinative of the problems that vexed them so much. He never failed to address Himself to the spiritual attitude that brought them to Him. We see this in the way He read their inmost thought; in the tireless patience which He showed towards the teachable; in the ready rebuke which met the froward; in the sudden anger that checked the impertinent or the insincere. His words often showed men to themselves as by a flash of lightning cleaving the inner mystery of their souls—

> Thy kind but searching glance could scan
> The very wounds that shame would hide,

and He sent many away with a terse but illuminating message which at once showed them what was wrong with them, and the only way in which to find release and perfect peace.

8. The Unit of the Kingdom.—Christ's mission to individuals is a recognition that all spiritual renewal and betterment must begin with the individual soul. The Greek ideal was centred in the State; ancient culture exaggerated the importance of an elect class; to the Jew, the temple and its institutions represented the primary unit of the religious life. But Jesus went straight to the ultimate unit of all human life, and found it in the individual man. In the sacred fastness of the soul He found the beginnings of the Kingdom of Heaven. His Church is a community of individuals, each of whom has received his emancipation, his renewal, his re-creation in the image of God. This is why He concentrated His energies on the conversion and education of single persons as the nucleus of His great spiritual community of followers. And this is why our Lord's dealings with individuals form so large a part of His recorded ministry. Fresh and living contact with men

always awoke a vivid response in Him; it roused His sympathy, awakened His powers, set flowing a stream of revealing words and deeds. However momentary the contact, however incidental the occasion, He responded to the call with unfailing and eager helpfulness. In the Gospels we have a series of conversations with typical individuals, each of whom represents a class, and from which we learn much of His method as a teacher. Let us now turn to some of these representative instances.

II.

1. Christ Dealt with Typical Individuals.—Among the motley group of individual men and women with whom Jesus had spiritual dealings we note the following types—the perplexed, the frivolous, the repentant, the despised, the inquiring, the sorrowful, the sanguine, the choleric, the despondent, the lethargic, the unsympathetic, the hostile, the cynical, the self-righteous, and many others. In addition to these, who came into more or less incidental contact with Him, we have the disciples, who form a class by themselves, in His treatment of whom we recognise first, an element of common instruction in matters pertaining to their common duties as apostles; secondly, a loving individual oversight, as each had need of a personal spiritual guidance and encouragement.

(1) *The Intellectually Perplexed—Nicodemus.*—If it is scarcely needful to accept the current notion that the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus by night was an act of cowardice, it seems clear from the conversation in John iii. 1-21, that he was one of those intellectually unstable individuals whose spiritual effectiveness is paralysed by a halting and perplexed attitude towards the mysteries of religion. This is the key to the interview he had with Jesus, and to the treatment he received. With such a man He had

clearly no deep sympathy, and so, ignoring his urbane but shallow compliments, He plunges at once into a statement of the vital law of spiritual health. What such a man needs most is a clear grasp of fundamental principles, and, above all, a realisation of the fact that religion is at bottom not a question of intellectual consistency, but of spiritual whole-heartedness. While Nicodemus was therefore sent away without much intellectual enlightenment, his mind was directed Godward, and on his conscience was laid the great alternative of choosing the better part. His presumption in posing as a religious leader while this personal question was still unsolved was rebuked (ver. 10); and his constitutional tendency to conceal the inward vacillation from which he suffered received a severe but salutary censure. Our Lord's treatment of Nicodemus is summary and masterful, as was meet with a nature so vacillating and uncertain.

(2) *The Frivolous—The Woman of Samaria.*—In vivid contrast with this cultured, intellectual Rabbi (the Amiel of the Gospel), we turn to the woman whom our Lord met beside Jacob's Well. In no other instance does our Lord's resourcefulness in dealing with difficult individuals stand out so prominently. He was divided from such a creature by almost every conceivable barrier—racial, intellectual, religious. It was a daring violation of conventional propriety to speak with her at all (John iv. 9; *cf.* ver. 27). How to reach her sympathies, and break through that thick hedge of bristling prejudice which separated them? Jesus begins by courteously asking a favour. There is no better way of disarming the antipathy of a stranger than this. Probably Jesus recognised also that beneath this callous life there was a good-natured heart. At any rate, the barrier was pierced through, and a lively interchange of thought took place. This conversation has been well characterised as a remarkable illustration of the

use of irony in the New Testament;[1] irony, that is, not in the common signification, as a convenient method of safely and delicately conveying insult or contempt by some equivocal language and intonation, but in the deeper sense, as making use of the double-sidedness of human life for a high purpose. The thoughts of the Saviour and those of the woman keep moving for some time on parallel but different planes: she, on the plane of the physical; He, of the spiritual; she, bandying words in a half-jesting, tormenting mood; He, lifting her up inevitably by degrees, till, having conquered her feminine wit and smitten her self-complacency to the dust, He sends her back to the village ("leaving there her water-pot") startled out of her frivolity, and with her soul ablaze with a great spiritual discovery, which she longs to share with her friends and neighbours. Was ever so signal a triumph of the spiritual over the frivolous as this, or a more convincing proof that with tact and insight there is no soul so citadelled in narrow and inaccessible prejudices that it may not be reached, convicted and redeemed by a saving word? This story is equally a rebuke to those who refrain from all serious conversation with strangers from a feeling of cowardice or a sense of false delicacy, and to those who force such conversations on others in a manner which defeats its object because it lacks the essential qualities of tact and intellectual resourcefulness.

(3) *The Repentant—The Woman in Simon's House.* —In the seventh chapter of Luke (vers. 36-51) we have a conversation which is double-sided from another point of view. Jesus at one and the same time administers a keen and cutting rebuke to an inhospitable cynic, and bestows heaven's pardon on a broken and repentant soul. Towards the one

[1] *T. Rhys Evans*, a biography by Richard Lovett, M.A. Sermon on "The Thirst of the Soul," p. 327 ff.

His words are as a flaming sword; on the other they fall like dew on the mown grass. We are not told how it was that a daughter of shame was able to penetrate into the household of a puritanical Pharisee at the time when he was entertaining his guests. The suggestion recently made that she was invited in imitation of the Roman custom of providing a retinue of female slaves for the entertainment of the guests may be doubtful; still it is clear that Simon knew her for a lost woman, and that for some reason of his own (probably with a view to providing a trap for Jesus) he tolerated her presence. Nor do we know how it was that she publicly broke down into tears of utter contrition, and that this mood was somehow the fruit of her contact with Christ. Had she met Him before, and had some stray word, or some direct message, or merely a passing look in the crowd, suddenly awakened her lost self, and was this her way of expressing her repentance, and her heartfelt gratitude to Him? We do not know; but the situation is clear: Here are a cynic, a sinner, and the Saviour face to face; and out of this strange encounter what shall come? We see the cynic, who, having invited Jesus to his banquet as the hero of the hour, shows Him scant courtesy, and fails in the simple duties of hospitality; and who, towards the woman, presents a front of lofty repugnance and contempt; we see the repentant "sinner" ignoring her host, and bestowing her heart's extravagant homage on the neglected Guest in utter self-abandonment of penitence; and we see the Saviour gazing on these two. How will He extricate Himself from this embarrassing situation? Quietly, He "states a case" to His puzzled host, and gets his expected reply; then He confounds him out of His own mouth with a merciless satire that humbles his pride; and at the same time He turns to the woman with words of unspeakable release and comfort. The courage and

the kindness He manifests completely vindicate His own attitude towards both; and out of this chance encounter there is woven a perpetual message of hope for the lost, and a judgment sharp as lightning against those who erect a false barrier of respectability against the return of the fallen into the ranks of God's elect.

(4) *The Social Outcast—Zaccheus.*—In close relation with this case, we may fitly consider Christ's treatment of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 1-10). This man Jesus again recognises as possessing the open heart. Did He know of him previous to that chance encounter by the wayside, or was His action the result of that swift insight into character which He possessed to such an unparalleled degree? Here again we are beyond our depth; but the actual situation is obvious. Jesus sees in the rejected publican a true "son of Abraham," and by daring public opinion, and breaking through the ostracism which had cast him aside, finds His way into his innermost sympathies, and sets his feet on the way of life. What such a man in his social isolation and disgrace needed was encouragement, not blame; and without saying a word about his past habits Jesus draws from Zaccheus a full and worthy resolution to mend his ways and to make ample compensation to those whom he may have victimised and wronged. This treatment once more is exactly adapted to the case; and as usual it is vindicated by the issue.

(5) *Faith in Unexpected Places.*—Three instances occur in which we see Jesus in His attitude towards exemplary and unlooked-for faith. The first is the centurion, whose servant was ill, and whose humility and trust were so signally manifested: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed" (Matt. viii. 8). The second is the Syrophœnician woman whose daughter was "possessed," and whose persistence and mother-wit wore down

the apparent unwillingness which He first showed towards her (Mark vii. 24-30). In both these cases Jesus manifests a glad surprise at an unexpected quality of faith in these two who were outside the ancient covenant of Israel. To the centurion He says: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"; and He follows up this saying with a prophetic vision of the innumerable company of the faithful from all nations who would believe on His word, and take their places among the elect (Matt. viii. 10-11), and of the judgment that would follow those who, with greater opportunities and a nobler discipline, failed to show the same spirit. To the distracted heathen mother, who had somehow heard of His healing power, and who would not be denied a boon for her beloved sick child, He gave way with a hearty grace; through the thin frost of His manner there suddenly burst forth a springtide of love and pity, as He said: "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter". The third instance is that of the woman with an issue of blood, who was healed by touching the hem of His garment in the crowd (Luke viii. 43-48). Here the case required another treatment. The mere physical healing was in itself little in His eyes; what He desired for the recipients of His bounty was a realisation that the supreme blessing was not health, but faith; and so He draws forth the unwilling woman out of her obscurity, and presses home upon her and the bystanders that the operative power in her was not the magic of the touch, but the power of faith—that tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. In these and other typical cases of faith we see the same unfailing discrimination in the treatment of souls, each being dealt with according to its condition and need.

(6) *Dispositions and Temperaments.*—There are many cases of dealings with men and women of varied temper and disposition, which bear out the

same remark. The scene with Martha and Mary mentioned in Luke x. 38-42 is an instance in point. The bearing of Jesus towards the sisters is easily misunderstood unless we remember His wonderful insight into character. Anything like undue favouritism in the treatment of His friends was utterly alien to His just and loving nature; we are told that He loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus, and we may be sure that His love for the elder sister who spent herself so willingly in His service was not less strong than for Mary, the simple, pious creature who hung upon His words with such happy devotion. But Martha was a woman who had the "defects of her qualities" in a marked degree; her love of hospitality ran into fussiness and undue elaboration, and interfered with the higher ends of fellowship; while there is no evidence whatever that Mary was really thoughtless and selfish. When, therefore, Martha, in a moment of irritation, complained unjustly of Mary's apparent unsisterliness, Jesus uttered one of those *obiter dicta* which at once disposed of the charge, and threw an illuminating light on the comparative values of life. It was as though He had said: "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost".

Temperament is also the keynote of that group of sayings which have been brought together by Luke, the psychologist-evangelist, whose grouping of his materials often throws light on particular incidents. We find these instances in the ninth chapter, which, indeed, is throughout full of sidelights on character. The temperaments have been roughly divided into four types—the *choleric*, the *sanguine*, the *melancholic*, the *phlegmatic*. These are all suggested here, and our Lord's attitude towards each is full of insight and tact. The *choleric* is found in John's attitude towards those who followed Jesus independently of His chosen disciples, and towards the

Samaritans who refused Him hospitality. Jesus sternly and emphatically reproves him and his brother James for this narrow and bitter spirit. There must be no exclusiveness and no revengeful feelings among His followers. The *sanguine* temperament is next dealt with, in the case of the scribe who impulsively offers to follow Him "whithersoever" He might go. In spite of His unfailing joy at winning an adherent Jesus declines the offered discipleship. He sees that this man is not ready for the great renunciation which he so glibly professes to make; and His answer takes the form of a gentle foreboding and reproof: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head". Such a man needed to count the cost before he made the final choice, and he is sent back to ponder on his impulsiveness, and to humble himself before the source of all spiritual strength. Very different is His attitude towards two others who show a tendency to waver at His call. To the *melancholic* and the *lethargic* He sounds a note of encouragement, and incites them to break away from the causes of hesitation which stand in the way of open discipleship (vers. 59-62). To each is spoken the exact word calculated to bring his hesitation to an end, and to gird him for a great and whole-hearted service as His follower.

(7) *The Self-Ignorant.*—There is no more attractive or pathetic figure among the men who sought our Lord's presence for advice and help than that of the *young ruler* (see Matt. xix. 16-30; Mark x. 17-31; Luke xviii. 18-30). There is certainly no instance in which we see more clearly the complete knowledge of character which Jesus possessed, or the wisdom with which He dealt with men. This wealthy aristocrat was simple and genuine in his motives. Having all that men usually desire, yet feeling a deeper hunger than could be satisfied by the advantages afforded by position, riches, or even

a blameless life, and not knowing exactly what ailed him, he went to the only one in whom he could place unreserved confidence. Finding himself one day within reach of the Master, and overcome with a generous impulse to unbosom himself to Him, he "came running," and in the open road kneeled reverently before Him, saying: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus, always accessible to the perplexed, turned to him at once with affectionate interest and regard. He looked into his very heart, with love beaming in His face, and paused a moment ere He spoke. At once He recognised the source of this soul's unrest, and divined the reason for his failure in the great quest. Slowly, a little sadly (one would think), but with an affectionate yearning in His voice, He ran over the usual tests of a holy life, and, having disposed of them, He spoke the determining word, and put the ultimate condition of blessedness before him. "If thou wouldest be perfect"—who cannot fail to see the eager upward glance which met these words, for was not that the very thing this young soul desired most?—or as another of the evangelists put it—"One thing thou lackest"—"go thy way, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me". As the fateful utterance falls on the recipient's ears we can see the light dying out of his face, the joy out of his heart. It is too much to do, too much to surrender; and at the same moment that the young ruler feels the inevitable truth of the Master's word, he realises his own inability to fulfil the tremendous sacrifice. He slowly rises from his knees, and with bowed head passes silently away, abashed, convicted, helpless, and Jesus is left alone with His disciples to ponder sadly on the demoralising influence of the love of wealth on the best spiritual elements of character.

2. An Important Caution.—These instances

might be almost indefinitely increased of the Master's method of dealing with the souls of men; but these must suffice. There is, however, one general but important remark to make before dismissing this part of our subject. We must be careful to remember that the sayings spoken to individuals are not to be taken as general statements, but strictly in their immediate connection. Some of the perplexities of faith are the fruit of neglecting this principle. Our Lord's saying to the young ruler, *e.g.*, has been construed on the one side into a counsel of perfection to such elect souls as are capable of rising to the height of voluntary poverty, but as having no bearing on the average Christian; and, on the other, into a denunciation of wealth as altogether incompatible with a Christian life. A fair interpretation rejects both alternatives. Jesus was dealing here, as in the cases previously mentioned, with an individual soul. His words have no application except to one in the same condition. Here we have no denunciation of wealth as such, no socialistic nostrum as to the distribution of property, but a special direction to a soul in a particular condition, *i.e.*, of secret avarice; and to this state of heart Jesus addressed Himself, as His after-words in Mark x. 24 plainly show. The right method of interpreting and applying such individual sayings, therefore, is to study the circumstances carefully, to disentangle the principle underlying them, and apply it to ourselves with due regard to altered conditions. This is a task of great delicacy and difficulty, but it is the only right method, and the only one that can claim to do justice to the words and spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEACHER AND THE KINGDOM.

As we have more than once observed in other connections, the great Teacher's aim was pre-eminently practical; His purpose was to win men for the Kingdom of God. It is therefore of great importance that we should understand His attitude towards candidates for admission; towards those who stood aloof or were fiercely hostile; and towards those actually within.

1. The Motives Brought to Bear on Men to Enter the Kingdom.—What incentives did Jesus put before men to accept the salvation which He came to offer? We note that in form His first public message was similar to that of John the Baptist: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17). In Mark, however, there is a suggestive variation in these words, which indicates a distinctive note in the preaching of Jesus: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the Gospel" (i. 15). While He joined in proclaiming the need for repentance on all and sundry, there was joined with the solemn warning the true evangelic note. He brought a Gospel to men; "good news" from God; and it was on this He perpetually insisted especially in His earlier ministry. The ministry of John was a thunderclap breaking through the grey twilight on the slumbers of a world; that of Jesus was like the voices of the morning heralding the bright day after a long and weary night. John struck heavy

blows at men's conscience; Jesus appealed to their better nature; in the Forerunner we find the strenuous note of coming judgment, in the One who followed there is a perpetual music of invitation; the one created a salutary and rousing fear, the other awakened a great expectancy. Consequently the ministry of John was a dark and disturbing episode; but the ministry of Jesus was a progressive revelation and a delightful surprise, in which the riches of the Kingdom of God were revealed in ever-brightening colours.

2. The next Step of the Master was to Attach Men to Himself.—Christ's love for men was only equalled by His passionate desire for their love in return. In asking for this, He was acting from no selfish motive; He used the awakened affection of His followers purely that He might draw them near to God, quicken their spiritual nature, and make them receptive to the treasures of the Kingdom. His call on those who responded to His message to rise and follow Him meant "Rise and follow holiness"; having, as it were, like the summer sun, drawn the vapour of their love upwards to Himself, He then sent it, as by a strong wind, to fall on the thirsty places of the earth. There has never been any one who commanded such love and homage as Jesus; nor any one who has made men's love for Himself so great a blessing to themselves and others.

3. We Note the Standard of Entrance into the Privileges of the Kingdom.—This standard clearly had no reference to any attainments of character; men and women of evil character were as welcome as the virtuous and the saintly. For the ground of their acceptance was not in themselves at all, but in the free grace and love of God their Father. Therefore merit had no place in the conditions of entrance. The one human condition was a spirit of self-surrender as regards the world, and of faith as regards Himself. These conditions,

however, were absolute. Those who manifested this temper were at once received into that fellowship of souls which was the nucleus of His Church. Those who failed to show it, who came from other or from interested motives, were either summarily rejected or were put back until they had "considered the cost" more thoroughly. Jesus would have no one as His follower who was half-hearted or who was moved by ulterior motives. Some of the passages that express the absoluteness of His demands are startling in their force and vividness (see especially Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33), but they have justified themselves by the experience of all subsequent ages.

4. Where Jesus Found His Disciples.—Jesus was ever looking for such souls as were capable of this great renunciation. It was His grief—a grief that deepened as His life drew to its end—to find so few of them among the religious classes; it was His unfailing delight to find them in many unsuspected places. One cannot help surmising that that element of joyful surprise which enters into so many of the "parables of grace"—the surprise of finding the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price—reflects something of the personal experience of the Saviour as He came upon these receptive souls in the course of His journeyings. He fanned the smoking flax of their spent souls, and bound up the bruised reed of their broken life with the devotion of a physician bringing a patient back from the grasp of death.

5. Christ's Attitude towards the Enemies of the Kingdom.—This brings us into sharp contact with another aspect of our Lord's character as a Teacher. He came face to face with enemies as well as friends: How did Jesus bear Himself towards these enemies? With the same discrimination which He ever manifested in His dealings with men.

He distinguished between those who refused His plea through ignorance, and those who did so with deliberate intention. He was filled with sadness at the blindness of so many who thoughtlessly refused the blessings He offered. They were "as sheep without a shepherd" (Mark vi. 34); they knew not the "day of their visitation" (Luke xix. 44). But His *anger* was roused at those who with full light refused to listen and to obey. To the Pharisees He said: "Now ye say, We see; *therefore your sin remaineth*" (John ix. 41). They had wilfully shut themselves out from the great offer of God, and their place was henceforth in the "outer darkness". His stern words to the self-righteous, to cavillers, to the finally unpenitent, are among the most scathing in literature. But His deepest wrath was reserved for those who not only themselves refused to enter the Kingdom, but stood in the way of others doing so (Matt. xxiii. 13). Towards such men He took up an attitude of unmeasured and unchangeable hostility. There was no bridge which could be thrown across the fathomless chasm which divided them from the grace of God. Incarnate love turned into sharpest lightning against them,—as the thunderbolt is forged out of the sunshine that sleeps on the summer cloud.

6. Christ's Dealings with Those within the Kingdom.—Once more turning to the other side of the picture, our eyes are gladdened by the vision of the Master's method with His chosen followers, and especially with His inner circle, the "College of the Twelve".

His Solicitude for Them.—Here we notice first a great solicitude for their growth in *faith* and in *grace.* Jesus spent great pains on the development of the higher life of His disciples. He carefully indoctrinated them, "as they were able to bear it," in the principles of the Blessed Life; the "Teaching on the Hill" (Matt. v.-vii.) was really His

programme of life and conduct for them, rather than a popular address to a miscellaneous multitude. He put them through a careful course of instruction in the laws of the Kingdom; illustrated various aspects of its mysteries in the parables, which He afterwards expounded to them as carefully (*ib.* xiii. 10, 18, 36); and gave them many wayside lessons on what they should avoid, and what they should do (see *ib.* xvi. 6 ff.; xviii. 1-6, etc.) in order to qualify for a high place in it. The ideal He set before them was so high (*ib.* v. 48) that only by assiduous training and entire dependence on God could they get within sight of it. Pre-eminently He was solicitous for them in the hour of temptation and danger, and He urged on them the perpetual duty of watchfulness and prayer as the soul's only true preservatives (*ib.* xxiv. 42; xxv. 13; Luke xxi. 36; xxii. 40, 46, etc.). Over these disciples He Himself ever watched with a motherlike anxiety and love; and in the last hour of His own life-trial His first and chiefest thought was for them (John xviii. 8). The shepherd-care of Jesus for His flock is one of the most beautiful aspects of His work on earth.

7. His Treatment of Doubt.—Very interesting and helpful also was the attitude taken by Jesus towards a lack of faith in His disciples. This is not a failing that is left behind on entrance into the Kingdom, it is a clinging trouble which is a part of our mortality, and must be considered not so much as a sin, as an infirmity. That is precisely the way in which Jesus dealt with it. He was very considerate where it rose from a lack of robustness in the soul, as when Peter sank in the waters on his way to Jesus (Matt. xiv. 31); He was full of reassurance where it was the fruit of an imperfect apprehension of His mission and work, as when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus for a clear statement of His Messiahship (*ib.* ii. 4, 5, 6); and He set Himself patiently and lovingly to

satisfy the demand for further evidence of a doubtful fact, as in the case of His disciples questioning the reality of His resurrection (Luke xxiv. 39; and Thomas, John xx. 27). The consideration shown by our Lord towards the doubter is a feature often painfully absent from the attitude of many who have taught in His name.

8. His Encouragement of a Family Feeling among His People.—Jesus knew that no soul can live a full spiritual life in solitude or in alienation from its fellows. He therefore founded a brotherhood to which all souls belonging to Him were to attach themselves. We see the nucleus of this in the circle of discipleship that gathered round Him. This brotherhood found its sanction in the Fatherhood of God, and in His own brotherly relationship to His people (John xiv. 1); according to the reality of this spiritual relationship His disciples would be true brethren (Matt. xxiii. 8, 9) one to another. He inculcated the spirit of humility and willing service as the fundamental principles of their mutual relationship (John xiii. 1-17; *cf.* Matt. xviii. 1), and at the Last Supper He emphasised the imperative need for a loving and loyal spirit in all their dealings together. Brotherly love was to be the proof of their faithfulness to Himself; and it was to be the proof to the world that they were truly His disciples. Out of this sentiment the characteristic life and service of the Church of Christ took its rise; it was the seed from which every other social grace and virtue sprang (*cf.* 1 Cor. xiii.). We see the fruit of this training in the beautiful love and comradeship of the early Christians, so that heathen writers were forced to exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another". The epistles are full of the fragrant blossom of this love, whose root was planted by Jesus in the hearts of His disciples.

CONCLUSION.

In gathering up the threads of this study of the Master's method, there are one or two points that call for a brief attention.

1. The Imitableness of Christ's Method.—The intensely Oriental character of that method is in a sense a stumbling-block to a realisation of the fact that the method of Jesus is in many of its aspects capable of being reproduced by those who teach and preach in His name. His way of dealing with men was the natural outgrowth of the mental habits of religious custom of His day. He made use of all the popular channels of instruction, refined and perfected the forms of speech in common vogue, and put a fine edge on each weapon of attack and appeal. The Oriental mind is intensely imaginative, emotional, and in a sense poetic. It delights in symbols, figures of speech, exaggerations, paradoxes. It is clear that it would be foolish, indeed altogether foreign to the *spirit* of Christ's method, if we slavishly reproduced the form of His teaching in dealing with the mind of to-day and with the men of the West. The true imitation of Christ as a Teacher is first to assimilate His spirit of intense sympathy with men, and then to adapt His teaching to the methods of instruction in vogue amongst us. Many even of His forms of instruction may be properly and effectively used. Illustrations, parables, similes, and even paradoxes are useful in addressing popular audiences, and in dealing with individuals in any age and land. But they must be illustrations drawn from the fields of their own experience, and the

facts and objects with which they are familiar in daily life.

2. The Uniqueness of Christ's Method.—But while there is much that is imitable in the method of our Master-Teacher, it has certain elements so peculiar and inseparable from His own personality and work, that they cannot enter into ours at all. He was in a special sense the embodiment of His own teaching. More than that, His life, His acts, His sufferings were an integral part of it. In a way that can be predicated by no apostle, prophet or teacher of religious knowledge, He was *the Truth.* "The Word was made flesh." The words of Jesus were not only a *part* of His work, but they were in a true sense the smaller part. We learn of Him, therefore, not only when we listen to His formal or informal instructions, but when we study the significance of His life and passion. The cradle, the cross, the open tomb are an essential part of Christian Truth, being the physical counterparts of the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Resurrection, which are the three pillars of the Faith. If Christ had uttered no word of spoken instruction, these grand object-lessons of spiritual realities, these supreme channels of revelation concerning the will, the love, and the redemptive purpose of God, would have been valid and full of eloquent appeal. As the Gospels give us the words and the acts of Jesus, telling us of what He said and did in detail, so the Epistles are concerned with the unfolding and enforcement of the truths implicitly contained in the Living Word as embodied in the person and sufferings of the Saviour. Thus the later writings of the New Testament take us into the secret of the life which lies behind the Gospel records, and enable us to understand their meaning in its light. We see "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the *face*," as well as in the *words*, of Jesus Christ. In that background of mystery from

which it emerged, we find a fresh lustre as well as a higher authority in the teaching of the Master. During that brief but pregnant ministry we see Eternity pressed into "one crowded hour of glorious life"; and that "crowded hour" will in its turn be "stretched to an eternity". Just as in a seed we find all the harvests of the past concentrated into one vivid point of burning life, so in the work and words of Jesus we find the fulfilment of all the prophetic revelations and foreshadowings of the past; just as in a seed we find the pent-up vitality of all harvests to come, so in Him we find the germinal point of the whole world's future thought and life in religion. Apparently bent on the word and the deed of the moment, each fitly spoken and finely wrought, the Master was sowing for all lands and centuries and races of mankind. The Master's method thus leads us along flowery paths of instruction in the things of God, into the "secret place of the Most High," and transforms the teachable disciple into the adoring worshipper.

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